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Calzaghe: Options In Two Divisions

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Volume 88, No. 11 Fall 2008

The RING

As The Wheel Turns

Did you ever see that chart—I think they call it the Wheel of Life—that illustrates the different stages of a person's life from infancy to death? It's the sort of thing that could be adapted to any organic entity, including boxing.

Boxing is organic in that you can trace the life cycles of the fighters' careers and the sport itself. Like the changing of the seasons, there's a predictable pattern and rhythm to the comings and goings, reassuring in its familiarity, frightening in its inevitability.

Note, for example, how the various articles in this issue focus on fighters at different phases of their boxing lives. There's an Olympic preview (highlighting boxers poised between the climax of their amateur years and the beginning of a professional career), a fighter just beginning to make a name for himself (Timothy Bradley), stars at the top of their game (Kelly Pavlik and most of the other 19 boxers featured in this year's "All-Star Report Cards"), an old favorite showing signs of slipping (Ricky Hatton), and a retired great finally getting the recognition he's long deserved (Eddie Perkins).

While individual careers must ultimately end, the sport has to constantly renew itself in order to survive, and we are at a juncture, as many have noted, where a significant number of our brightest stars—Oscar De La Hoya, Joe Calzaghe, Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, Hatton—will soon be just memories. Floyd Mayweather, of course, has already left the stage, at least for now.

The boxing wheel will continue to turn without them; it just won't reach the top of the cycle for a while. As in life, the trick is to enjoy each stage for what it offers, not worry so much about what it doesn't.

Forget the heavyweights, and revel in the welters. So what if Mayweather never fights again. Just think about all the money you won't have to spend on his boring pay-per-views. Don't sweat what's going to happen when "The Golden Boy" hangs up his gloves.

His replacement is already somewhere on the wheel, perhaps prepping for the Olympics team, just as Oscar was at the time Ray Leonard lost to Terry Norris.

If none of the above is reassuring, maybe this will help: I heard a radio program recently that claimed that genetic engineering is rapidly reaching a point where we will soon be able to clone Manny Pacquiao. And if that happens, we're going to need another spoke on the wheel.

***

I had a talk with Joe Calzaghe recently about his status as both THE RING's light heavyweight and super middleweight champion. I wanted to emphasize to him that such a rare and lofty status came with the heavy responsibility of defending both belts.

"If Roy Jones signs to fight me and he can make 168 pounds, I'll defend both of my belts at the same time," said Joe. "And if I decide to give up one of them, I'll inform THE RING immediately."

That, folks, is the way it is supposed to work: no threats, no intimidation, just an honorable champion respecting the sport and himself enough to do the right thing.

***

We hope we haven't confused too many people with this edition's cover date of Fall 2008. This is part of our plan to bring the cover dates and the on-sale dates closer together. Beginning next issue, we will resume our monthly dating, so look for the October 2008 edition, on sale August 26.

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Opening Shot

No Flying Hair Here

Dave Parris had to be chuckling to himself as he sat ringside judging the Paulie Malignaggi-Lovemore Ndou fight in Manchester and watched his cohort, Mickey Vann, have to deal with Malignaggi's fly-away hair. Earlier, Parris was the third man in the ring, but he got to referee a fight between two baldies, Matthew Hatton and Craig Watson. It's Ricky's kid brother landing the big left here, but it was Watson who walked away with the unanimous decision and the Commonwealth welterweight title.

PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

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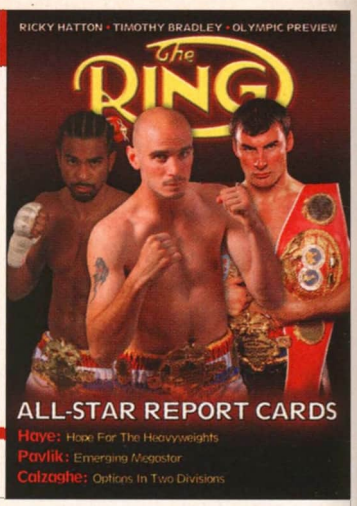

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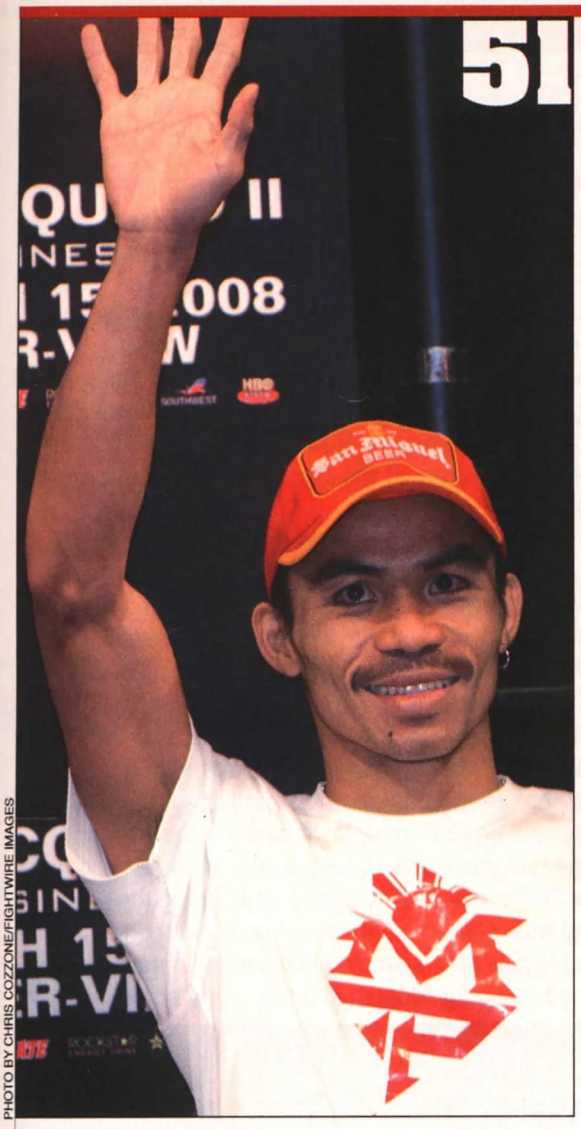

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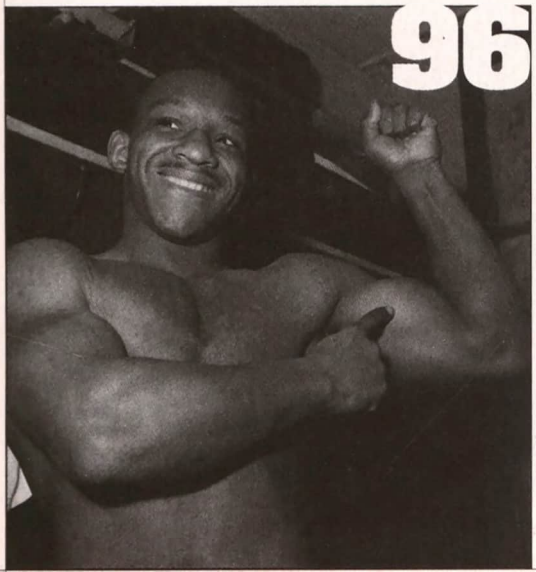

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A Summer Tradition

This year's Induction Weekend at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, featured only two living boxers, who were diametrically opposed in career and public persona: Larry Holmes and Eddie Perkins. (Other living inductees were THE RING's longtime Asia correspondent Joe Koizumi, journalist Dave Anderson, and promoters Frank Warren and Mogens Palle.)

The appearance of Holmes, the controversial and irascible former heavyweight champion, had folks on edge. Is he going to show? How's he going to act? Sure enough, no sooner did Holmes arrive than there was controversy. He demanded that autograph-seekers buy his book at the advertised "free" signing during the memorabilia show. When advised of the breach of etiquette, an angry Holmes stormed out.

Word spread quickly. Had Holmes left altogether? No, that night at the Banquet of Champions, Larry gave a well-received and positive talk about overcoming adversity. The next day, while being spirited to the parade in a golf cart, a little girl ran alongside to grab his hand. Holmes had the anxious driver stop, long enough to snap scrapbook photos. For those who took the trouble to look (Marciano fans aside), there have always been two sides to Larry. Induction Weekend provided no exception.

Then there's Perkins, for years the most egregious oversight by the election committee (the next are Brian Mitchell and Don Elbaum). How can a guy with 20 losses be in the Hall? Many of the Internet writers have never heard of him!

But Perkins' story is *how* he did it: lacking knockout power, relying on decisions when they were even worse than now, and with no hometown after Chicago boxing collapsed in the wake of the Jim Norris-IBC investigation.

Perkins went 1-1-1 in three fights with Duilio Loi in Milan for the title at junior welterweight. He regained the title by beating Roberto Cruz in the Philippines, and defended against "Bunny" Grant in Jamaica and Yoshinori Takahashi in Japan before the bad decision finally caught up to him in Venezuela against hometown hero Carlos Hernandez, whom he had previously defeated, also in Venezuela.

Now 71, Perkins wasn't up to directly facing the crush of fans, but was visible around the grounds, supported by his wife and family. After spending thousands on memorabilia, renowned collector Mustafa Terens commented, "It was

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Living inductees Koizumi, Warren, Perkins, and Holmes show off their rings

worth the trip to see the smile on Perkins' face."

The memorabilia show isn't just for collectors. True, you have to pay to get in, which entitles you to stand in a long line for one of two boxers, who work in shifts, to get an autograph ... at no additional charge. But a walkabout can highlight the weekend, whether one is an autograph hound, collector, or neither. Boxing has a history, wound into the social fabric as possibly no other sport, and the memorabilia show is like a mobile museum. A bit untidy, to be sure, but the surprise discoveries are part of the fun. Items range from the sublime to the ridiculous. A Louis-Schmeling II poster failed to sell, at 50 grand. And then there's Manny Pacquiao Energy Drink, De La Hoya bobbleheads, Muhammad Ali on a box of Wheaties and a bag of popcorn, and a six-pack of Dempsey Stout (presumably "Nonpareil"), with the beer included.

There's also a peek into boxing's past, a provocative compare and contrast to what we have today. A poster reads "It will be a dark 4th of July if the eclipse looks like this." On a moon is the face of Jack Johnson, crossing over a sun portraying Jim Jeffries. What were they thinking? The July 1956 cover of THE RING declares "Negro Boxers Exploited Say Commies."

Posters, more than anything else, fire the imagination. Wall-sized Madison Square Garden placards trumpet Joe Louis vs. "Red" Burman, Tony Zale vs. Georgie Abrams, Tony Canzoneri vs. "Bummy" Davis ("Hebrew KO King"). But what of the guys on the undercards? Whatever became of Ernie Vigh or Sammy Luftspring? Makes you want to buy an old *The Ring Record Book And Boxing Encyclopedia* ... for $175.

Overall, it was a typical Induction Weekend. Most boxers were cordial (well, there *is* Pernell Whitaker), and fans make a game of dodging security and exchanging success stories. Faces change, but the excitement of the chase remains. See you next June.

—J.R. Jowett

Tszyu Makes It Official

Kostya Tszyu's motto, translated from the Latin *Vincit qui se vincit*, revealed much about his warrior spirit: "He conquers who conquers himself." Through much of his career, the former world junior welterweight champion was a conqueror in the mold of Genghis Khan.

Now, more than three years after his brutal defeat by current 140-pound world champion Ricky Hatton at the MEN Arena in Manchester, England, the proud Australia-based Russian has finally decided that he will not box again, following a long period of vacillation.

"I'm 100 percent sure I shall not be back to boxing ... at least, the way you [the media] expect me to be back," he said to Russian reporters in the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky following a meeting in the first week of June with Kamchatka governor Alexey Kuzmitsky. "I will turn 39 in two months and that's a critical age. I feel myself young and healthy, but I gave this sport 30 years of my life, too much for now. I want to devote myself to other activities ... Fifty to 100 children will go to the gym following my visit. Some of them will stay there for a while to become future prospects and stars. I think it's more important than my personal ambitions."

Tszyu's journey is a classic story of struggle. As a boy growing up in the small apartment his parents shared with another family in the Russian town of Serov—situated on the southern slopes of the Ural Mountains, which cut a swathe through the wastelands of Siberia—he slept on the cold floor. But his final resting place as a fighter will surely be at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York.

His harsh upbringing under the old Soviet system ignited in him an almost primeval competitive instinct. In 270 amateur bouts, he lost only 11 on his path to gold in the 1991 World Championships in Sydney. When he defected to Australia he did not speak a word of English, but he linked up with renowned trainer Johnny Lewis and won the IBF light welterweight title in 1995 and the world title in 2001.

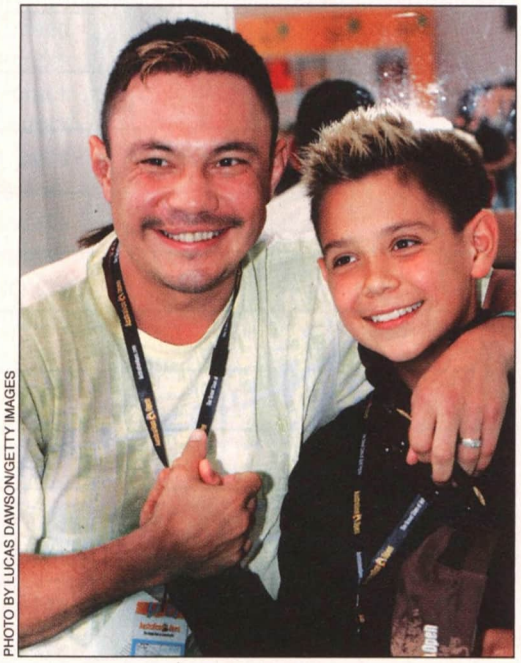


PHOTO BY LUCAS DAWSON/GETTY IMAGES

Tszyu (with son Timophey) has finally called it quits

Tszyu, 31-2 (25) with 1 no-contest, is a hero in his adopted homeland and he was appointed an international ambassador for Moscow's abortive bid to host the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics by Vladimir Putin, the Russian prime minister. "I love it here [in Australia] because I created myself here and made my name," he said. "People regard me as Australian and I'm comfortable with that. Mama and Papa and Olga [Tszyu's sister] are here, too, and my wife, Natasha, has given birth to our three children here in Australia, though I've never separated myself from my Russian roots. I'm Russian and I will always be Russian in my heart, but I also mean something to Australians now."

He means much, too, to anyone who witnessed his magnificent talent.

—Brian Doogan

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
5/21/08	Johnnie Edwards KO 7 Freddie Norwood *Face-first fall looked as if it was filmed in slow motion*	ESPN2	jl	C+	C+	B
5/21/08	Edner Cherry KO 10 Stevie Johnston *Brutal kayo leaves Johnston on canvas for five minutes*	ESPN2	l	B-	C+	C+
5/23/08	Jason Estrada KO 7 Moultrie Witherspoon *Estrada finds weaker foe than his kayo ratio*	ESPN2	h	C	C-	C
5/23/08	Jose Herrera KO 5 Aaron Williams *Shocking upsets like this are why we love boxing*	ESPN2	c	C+	C	B
5/23/08	Marcos Jimenez KO 4 Baudel Cardenas *Dominican kayos Mexican in Puerto Rico*	Telef	f	C-	C	C+
5/23/08	Eric Morel KO 3 Jose Bernal *32-year-old former titlist tallies third comeback win*	Telef	b	B-	C	C
5/24/08	Paul Malignaggi W 12 Lovemore N'dou *A close shave on the scorecards; bad haircut between rounds*	Versus	jw	A-	C+	C+
5/24/08	**Ricky Hatton W 12 Juan Lazcano** ***When will an American city support a boxer like Manchester does?***	**Versus**	**jw**	**A**	**B-**	**B**
5/30/08	Monty Meza Clay KO 1 Fernando Lizarraga *Clay does a passable Joe Frazier bob-and-weave impersonation*	Telef	jl	B-	C	C+
6/04/08	Gabriel Rosado W 8 James Moore *Bad run of luck continues for Irish fighters*	ESPN2	jm	C-	C+	C
6/04/08	Yusaf Mack W 10 Daniel Judah *Mack overcomes the lesser of two Judah's*	ESPN2	lh	B-	C+	C+
6/06/08	Urbano Antillon W Jose Cruz *Antillon is on verge of cracking the top 10*	Telef	l	C+	C	B-
6/06/08	Marco Antonio Rubio KO 5 Alfredo Cuevas *Say hello to the next Yori Boy Campas*	Telef	m	B-	C+	B-
6/06/08	Sebastien Demers W 8 Sam Hill *Was Hill's back glued to the ropes?*	ESPN2	m	B-	C	C
6/06/08	Herman Ngoudjo W 12 Souleymane M'Baye *Ngoudjo finally gets the decision in a close fight*	ESPN2	l	B+	B	B-
6/07/08	Paul Williams KO 1 Carlos Quintana *13th round is very unlucky for Quintana*	Show	w	A-	A-	B
6/07/08	Sergio Mora W 12 Vernon Forrest *The Latin Snake sambas past The Viper*	Show	jm	A	B-	B
6/07/08	Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Daniel Ponce De Leon *Juan-Man is no longer boxing's best-kept secret*	HBO	jf	A	B+	B
6/07/08	**Kelly Pavlik KO 3 Gary Lockett** ***Could you tell Lockett was a mandatory defense?***	**HBO**	**m**	**A**	**C-**	**C+**
6/11/08	Peter Quillin W 10 Dionisio Miranda *Colombian slugger tests Quillin's chin*	ESPN2	m	C+	C+	C+
6/11/08	Deandre Latimore KO 7 Sechew Powell *Yet another hyped NYC boxer fails to make the grade*	ESPN2	jm	B-	B-	C+
6/13/08	David Lopez W 10 Michael Walker *Camouflage trunks could not hide Walkers porous defense*	Telef	m	B-	C+	C
6/13/08	James De La Rosa W 8 Troy Wilson *Another display of fluid bodypunching from De La Rosa*	ESPN2	jm	C+	C	C+
6/13/08	Patrick Lopez W 10 Juaquin Gallardo *Two-time Olympian bounces back nicely from first loss*	ESPN2	jw	C+	C	C+
6/18/08	Cornelius Lock KO 10 Roger Gonzalez *"Speedy" fails to outrun steady pressure of Lock*	ESPN2	jl	C+	B-	B

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

Boxing Bookshelf

What sort of fighter could train on gin and pork chops, but was still good enough to beat the best lightweight of the day, draw with the best welterweight and middleweight of the day, beat one of the best light heavyweights of the day, and strike such fear among the heavyweights of the era that the champion would avoid him?

If you answered Sam Langford, give yourself a long, stinky cigar, the sort favored by Langford, and congratulate yourself. Langford beat Joe Gans, held Barbados Joe Walcott and Stanley Ketchel even, whipped Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, and got the best of most heavyweights during the Jack Johnson era. He fought Johnson too. Johnson won, but saw enough to know he didn't want a rematch.

Much of Clay Moyle's fine, new book, *Sam Langford: Boxing's Greatest Uncrowned Champion* (Bennet & Hastings, 416 pages, hardcover, $29.95), pulls together many of the myths and facts about Langford, and makes his worldwide pursuit of Johnson into a chase equal to Captain Ahab's stalking of Moby Dick.

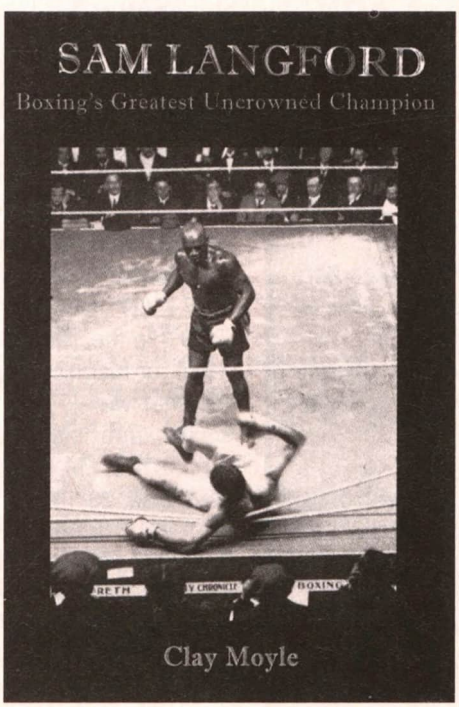
Langford's career seems to be the basis for many boxing archetypes. Here we have the supremely talented black fighter who was stifled during the years of Jim Crow (denied even by Johnson, the black champion of the time); he fought beyond his prime, until his eyes were so bad that he had to feel his way along the ropes to find his corner between rounds; he ended up penniless and alone, occasionally struck down by passing automobiles because he couldn't see.

But Moyle, a member of the International Boxing Research Organization, also reminds us that Langford had a large following in America, as well as in Europe and Mexico. As the book's many wonderful photographs show, Langford was every bit as colorful as Johnson. And for a cactus-stump of a man who disdained training, Langford was a marvelous fighting machine with a profound knowledge of the ring.

There will always be those who over-praise Langford, those who insist he would've been 200-0 with 200 knockouts, if only he weren't handcuffed by the indignities of the era. While it's undoubtedly true that Langford carried some opponents and took a few dives, he also lost a lot of bouts due to his poor conditioning. Moyle follows the usual argument that when it appeared his shot at Johnson's title would never happen, Langford grew fat and lazy. Still, Moyle approaches the subject in an even-handed manner, and is never maudlin.

One wonders how boxing history might've changed if Langford, rather than Johnson, had been the first black fighter to win the heavyweight championship. Langford was certainly a more crowd-pleasing fighter, and if half the quotes attributed to him are true, he was better with the press. Moyle's book makes us think 1908 America might've enjoyed seeing Langford wear the crown. At the very least, Langford wouldn't have denied Johnson a title shot.

—Don Stradley



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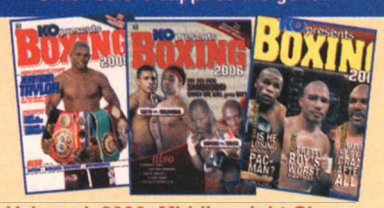

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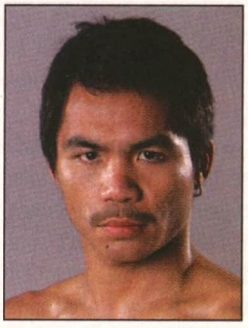
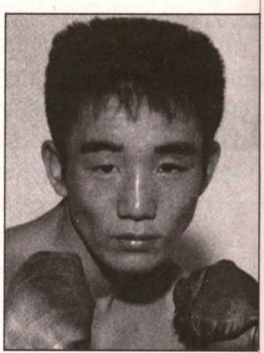
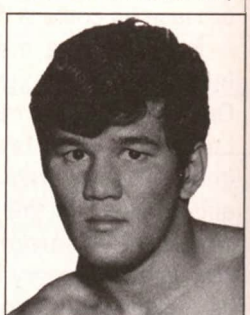


Pacquiao: On postage stamp

Manny Pacquiao has become the first Filipino athlete to be featured on a Philippines postal stamp. A regular and special limited edition of Pacquiao stamps were designed by the Philippines Postal Corporation and went on sale the first week of June. The seven-peso Pacquiao stamp comes in four different designs, featuring Pac-Man in a fighting stance. "From his lowly beginnings to what he has achieved and for all he brought to our country and people, he truly deserves the honor," said **Elizabeth C. Tungol**, who heads the Pacquiao stamp project ... Former heavyweight champion **Lennox Lewis** has spoken out on behalf of Canadian amateur boxing, which is badly in need of additional funding and hasn't garnered an Olympic medal since **David Defiagbon** won silver in Atlanta 12 years ago. "There are a lot of young, bright stars out there for boxing, and they are not really getting the opportunity," said Lewis, who won the super heavyweight gold medal for Canada at the 1988 Olympic in Seoul, South Korea. "We have a lot of talent and a lot of prospects. We just need to feed them and nourish them" ... Former stripper **Milana Dravnel**, 22, has dropped her $25-million lawsuit against **Oscar De La Hoya** after experts concluded the risqué photos of De La Hoya that Dravnel claimed were authentic had been digitally doctored. "Oscar always claimed the photos were false," said **Judd Burstein**, the boxer's lawyer. "She was facing very large damages and so she agreed to drop the case" ... Former heavyweight champion **Evander Holyfield** claims that his 109-room mansion in Fairburn, Georgia, is no longer up for foreclosure and that the mother of one of his 11 children falsely accused him of skipping child support payments to embarrass him. "I not broke. I'm just not liquid," Holyfield told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "I do feel kind of sad because things have always been positive and now everybody want to jump on me like I'm the worst person in the world and went out and blew all my money." Regarding the delinquent child support accusations, Holyfield said: "Never—I would never do something like that ... I have always taken care of my children." Adding to Holyfield's financial woes is lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City, Utah, that alleges the fighter failed to repay a $550,000 loan ... Government witness **Dwayne Meyers**, testifying at the trial of **Abubakr Raheem**, who is accused of driving a getaway car after a turf-war killing, said that former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** put up $50,000 for a proposed hit on a gang member suspected of killing his friend and bodyguard, **Darryl "Homicide" Baum**, in 2000. The alleged contract was never carried out ... Kalamazoo, Michigan, resident **Rosemary Contreras** has filed a lawsuit against several people and organizations, including Kalamazoo Public Schools, in connection with the boxing-related injury to her 12-year-old son, **Juan Contreras**. The boy is in a coma after suffering a subdural hematoma during a March 15 amateur bout. **James M. Bradley**, attorney for Ms. Contreras, said the suit "primarily stems from not having an ambulance on site" ... Former featherweight contender **Mitsunori Seki**, 66, died on June 6 in Tokyo, Japan. Seki, who turned pro in 1958, compiled a 61-11-1 (35) record, including 12 successful defenses of the OPBF featherweight title, before retiring in 1968. He had five shots at a world title, losing to **Pone Kingpetch** (L 15) at flyweight, and **Sugar Ramos** (KO by 6), **Vincente Saldivar** (L 15, KO by 7), and **Howard Winstone** (KO by 9) at featherweight. At the time of his death, Seki managed and promoted WBA 105-pound titleholder **Yutaka Niida** ... Former middleweight contender **Tony Licata**, 56, died on May 22. The smooth boxing New Orleans native went undefeated in his first 52 pro bouts en route to an overall 61-7-4 (27) record. In his lone world title fight, Licata was TKO'd in the 10th round by **Carlos Monzon** on June 30, 1975, at Madison Square Garden. Another well-known New Orleans boxer, light heavyweight **Jerry Celestine**, 59, died on May 17. Celestine, 28-13-1 (21), challenged **Michael Spinks** for the WBA light heavyweight title on June 12, 1982, and was knocked out in the eighth round. He had his final bout on September 25, 1984. The cause of death was not known at press time.



Seki: Dead at 66



Licata: Monzon victim dies

Quotable

"No, I don't want to copy David Beckham and be on the front of newspapers in my underwear. That is too big for me. I'll stick to being normal."

—British lightweight contender Amir Khan, explaining why he's not interested in signing lucrative a deal to model underwear

"Whatever it is, it's happening more than any of us can recall. That's not a bad thing. Upsets in boxing are thrilling. They are what keep us tuning in. Here's to many more."

*—Joe Tessitore, blow-by-blow announcer for ESPN2's **Friday Night Fights**, lauding the spate of upsets the network has broadcast this season*

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended June 16, 2008

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: No changes.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior Middleweights: Major shakeups at 154. Sergio Mora makes his debut at two, based on his upset victory over Vernon Forrest (first last issue), who drops to four. The move makes Verno Phillips (second last issue) the new number-one contender. The reshuffling also drops Cory Spinks, Alex Bunema, Joachim Alcine, and Sergei Dzinziruk down one slot each, while Travis Simms (eighth last issue) exits due to inactivity.
Welterweights: Floyd Mayweather retires, relinquishing the world championship. Paul Williams (fourth last issue) moves up to three, after his first-round blastout of Carlos Quintana (third last issue), who drops to five. Antonio Margarito (fifth last issue) moves up to four.
Junior Welterweights: Gavin Rees (fifth last issue), Vivian Harris (sixth last issue), and Souleymane M'Baye (seventh last issue) all exit. Herman Ngoudjo comes in at five, based on his victory over M'Baye, while Ricardo Torres re-enters at six, and Juan Urango enters at seven.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: Naoki Matsuda (sixth last issue) departs after getting stopped in two rounds by veteran Guty Espadas Jr., who enters at 10. The switch moves up Jorge Linares, Martin Honorio, Nicky Cook, and Takahiro Aoh one place each.
Junior Featherweights: Juan Manuel Lopez debuts at three on the strength of his one-round stoppage of Daniel Ponce De Leon (third last issue), who drops to eight. Somsak Sithchatchawal (eighth last issue) exits due to weak opposition.
Bantamweights: Veerapol Sahaprom (second last issue) exits after suffering a fourth-round upset loss to Vusi Malinga and announcing his retirement. Veerapol's departure ended a remarkable 662 consecutive weeks in the rankings. Malinga debuts at 10. Anselmo Moreno (ninth last issue) makes the major jump to two, thanks to his decision victory over Wladimir Sidorenko, who stays at three. Sasha Bakhtin enters at nine. Simone Maludrottu (10th last issue) departs.
Junior Bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: Raul Garcia (10th last issue) jumps to two, after his decision upset of Florante Condes (second last issue), who falls to five. Condes' demotion also drops Muhammad Rahman, Katsunari Takayama, Donnie Nietes, Omar Soto, and Nkosinathi Joyi one place each.
Pound-for-pound: Floyd Mayweather's retirement moves Manny Pacquiao (second last issue) into the number-one position. Mayweather's departure also elevates everyone rated seven through three one slot. Ricky Hatton (eighth last issue) exits, which allows Kelly Pavlik (ninth last issue) and Cristian Mijares (10th last issue) to advance to seven and eight, respectively. Mayweather and Hatton's departures also make room for Rafael Marquez to return at nine, and Ivan Calderon to debut at 10.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
2. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight/
   Light Heavyweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
7. **Kelly Pavlik**
   Middleweight
8. **Cristian Mijares**
   Junior Bantamweight
9. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
10. **Ivan Calderon**
    Junior Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to
TheRing-online.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended June 16, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

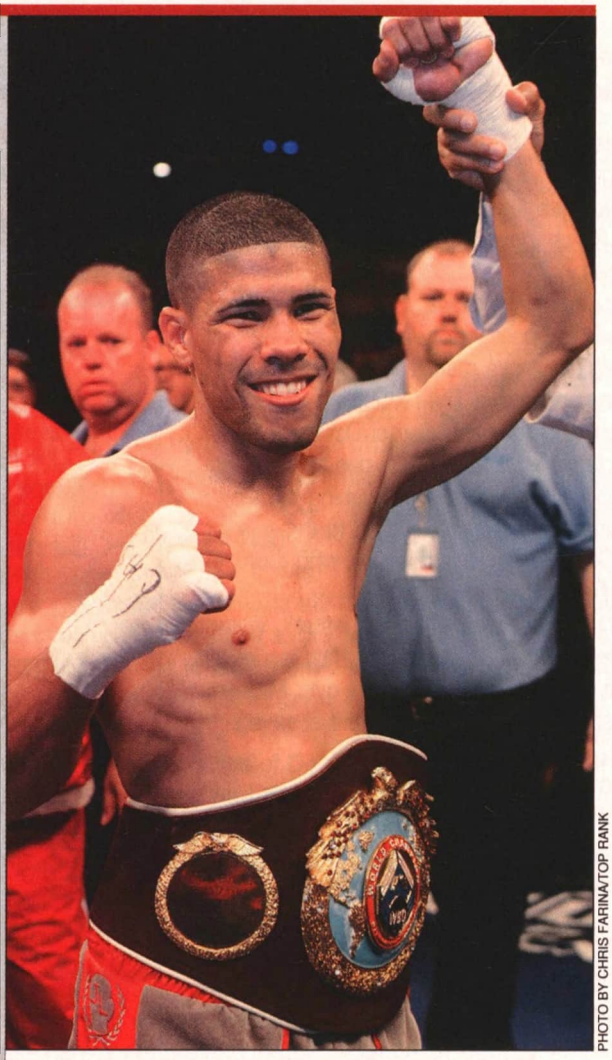


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Junior featherweight Juan Manuel Lopez makes a smashing debut at three after his one-round demolition of Daniel Ponce De Leon

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 50-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 30-1 (23)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 48-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 15-0 (11)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-6 (26)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-7-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 42-10-1 (21)
2. **SERGIO MORA** Los Angeles, CA 21-0-1 (5)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 39-5 (30)
4. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-3 (29)
5. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
6. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
7. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
8. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 35-0 (22)
9. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-4-1 (23)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 43-1-1 (23)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 22-1-1 (15)
2. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 35-1-2 (25)
4. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 35-1 (15)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-2 (19)
6. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
8. **NICKY COOK** England 28-1(16)
9. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-0-1 (8)
10. **GUTY ESPADAS JR.** Mexico 42-7 (27)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 29-2 (20)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 22-0 (20)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 27-0 (10)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 34-1 (24)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 32-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 28-4 (18)
8. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-2 (30)
9. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 25-1 (18)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 38-6 (32)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 24-2 (8)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 22-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-1-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 22-2 (18)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
6. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
7. **ABNER MARES** Montebello, CA 16-0 (10)
8. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)
9. **SASHA BAKHTIN** Japan 19-0 (8)
10. **VUSI MALINGA** South Africa 18-2-1 (11)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM** Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK** France 33-4 (22)
3. **TOMASZ ADAMEK** Poland 34-1 (23)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK** Poland 41-2 (31)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN** Germany 29-3-1 (18)
6. **O'NEIL BELL** Atlanta, GA 26-3-1 (24)
7. **ENZO MACCARINELLI** Wales 28-2 (21)
8. **MARCO HUCK** Germany 21-1 (16)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV** Russia 24-1-1 (17)
10. **RUDOLF KRAJ** Germany 14-0 (10)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA 48-5-1 (32)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL 27-4 (19)
3. **CHAD DAWSON** New Haven, CT 26-0 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON** Miami, FL 47-12-2 (32)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI** Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS** England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU** Canada 25-0 (15
9. **CHRIS HENRY** Houston, TX 21-1 (17)
10. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER** Germany 31-1 (25)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER** Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE** Australia 32-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE** Canada 22-0 (18)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE** Mexico 27-1 (21)
5. **JEFF LACY** St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH** England 23-0 (19)
7. **ALLAN GREEN** Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA** Australia 26-3-2 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN** Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR** Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK Youngstown, OH 34-0 (30)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM** Germany 26-0 (21)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM** Germany 29-2-1 (13)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER** Germany 29-2 (14)
5. **AMIN ASIKAINEN** Finland 24-1 (16)
6. **RANDY GRIFFIN** Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 62-8 (43)
8. **RAYMOND JOVAL** Netherlands 37-4 (16)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ** Mexico 35-12 (22)
10. **GIOVANNI LORENZO** New York, NY 26-0 (18)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIGUEL COTTO** Puerto Rico 32-0 (26)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
3. **PAUL WILLIAMS** Augusta, GA 34-1 (25)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO** Mexico 36-5 (26)
5. **CARLOS QUINTANA** Puerto Rico 25-2 (19)
6. **ZAB JUDAH** Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
7. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY** Bronx, NY 34-2 (20)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO** Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **JACKSON BONSU** Belgium 28-1 (23)
10. **KERMIT CINTRON** Reading, PA 29-2 (27)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON England 44-1 (31)

1. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI** Brooklyn, NY 25-1 (5)
2. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY** Palm Springs, CA 22-0 (11)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER** England 36-2-2 (21)
4. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK** Germany 29-2-1 (13)
5. **HERMAN NGOUDJO** Canada 17-2 (9)
6. **RICARDO TORRES** Colombia 32-1 (28)
7. **JUAN URANGO** Miami, FL 20-1-1 (16)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU** Australia 46-10-1 (31)
9. **JUAN LAZCANO** El Paso, TX 37-5-1 (27)
10. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR Miami, FL 36-3-1 (22)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL** Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **DAVID DIAZ** Chicago, IL 34-1-1 (17)
3. **JUAN DIAZ** Houston, TX 33-1 (17)
4. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ** Mexico 25-3 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ** Coachella, CA 34-4 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS** Australia 23-1 (20)
7. **AMIR KHAN** England 17-0 (13)
8. **YURI ROMANOV** Belarus 21-2 (14)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM** Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON** Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO Philippines 46-3-2 (35)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 48-4-1 (35)
2. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
3. **EDWIN VALERO** Venezuela 24-0 (24)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 44-6-2 (28)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS** Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
6. **ALEX ARTHUR** Scotland 26-1 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI** Thailand 55-3-1 (44)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI** South Africa 35-3-1 (18)
9. **MZONKE FANA** South Africa 27-4 (10)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 27-4 (19)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CRISTIAN MIJARES** Mexico 35-3-2 (14)
2. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 37-3-1 (28)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ** Venezuela 32-3 (27)
4. **NOBUO NASHIRO** Japan 11-1 (7)
5. **JORGE ARCE** Mexico 49-4-1 (37)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV** Russia 29-3-1 (9)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO** Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **Z GORRES** Philippines 28-2-2 (15)
9. **VIC DARCHINYAN** Australia 29-1-1 (23)
10. **A.J. BANAL** Philippines 17-0-1 (14)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE** San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO** Japan 32-2-3 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** Thailand 67-3-1 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA** Japan 32-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ** Argentina 27-0-2 (17)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ** Panama 26-2 (19)
7. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT** Thailand 43-1-1 (18)
8. **JOSE LOPEZ** Puerto Rico 36-7-2 (30)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA** Japan 17-0 (11)
10. **HUGO CAZARES** Mexico 26-4-1 (19)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON Puerto Rico 31-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS** Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA** Bell Gardens, CA 19-0-1 (15)
3. **EDGAR SOSA** Mexico 32-5 (17)
4. **JUANITO RUBILLAR** Philippines 46-10-7 (22)
5. **OMAR NINO** Mexico 25-3-1 (11)
6. **DANIEL REYES** Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA** Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM** France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO** Argentina 18-1 (9)
10. **ADRIAN HERNANDEZ** Mexico 13-0-1 (11)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA** Japan 23-1-3 (9)
2. **RAUL GARCIA** Mexico 23-0-1 (15)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI** Thailand 26-0 (10)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA** Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **FLORANTE CONDES** Philippines 22-4-1 (20)
6. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN** Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
7. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA** Japan 21-3 (9)
8. **DONNIE NIETES** Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
9. **OMAR SOTO** Puerto Rico 13-2-1 (6)
10. **NKOSINATHI JOYI** South Africa 17-0 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

Polish The Silver

October will mark 25 years for me on the boxing beat. It doesn't sound all that long until you refer to it as "a quarter of a century." Then it sounds like, well, a quarter of a century. Let me put it in perspective: My career has spanned that of a fellow, washed-up geriatric, Evander Holyfield, not to mention seven Olympic Games and 29 different alphabet heavyweight kings. Unless you're Charlie Watts, and your job is drummer for the Rolling Stones, who in his right mind keeps a beat that long?

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Ryan's fear in the next 25 years is a new super heavyweight class that leaves smaller heavyweights like David Haye fighting for lesser stakes

Five years ago, on the 20th anniversary of my first boxing byline, it seemed appropriate to take a look back. Specifically, at the 20 biggest changes the fight game had experienced during the prior two decades. As this latest anniversary approaches, it's a good time to look ahead. Rather than try to predict what might happen over the next 25 years, though, let me instead tell you what my hopes are for the Sweet Science:

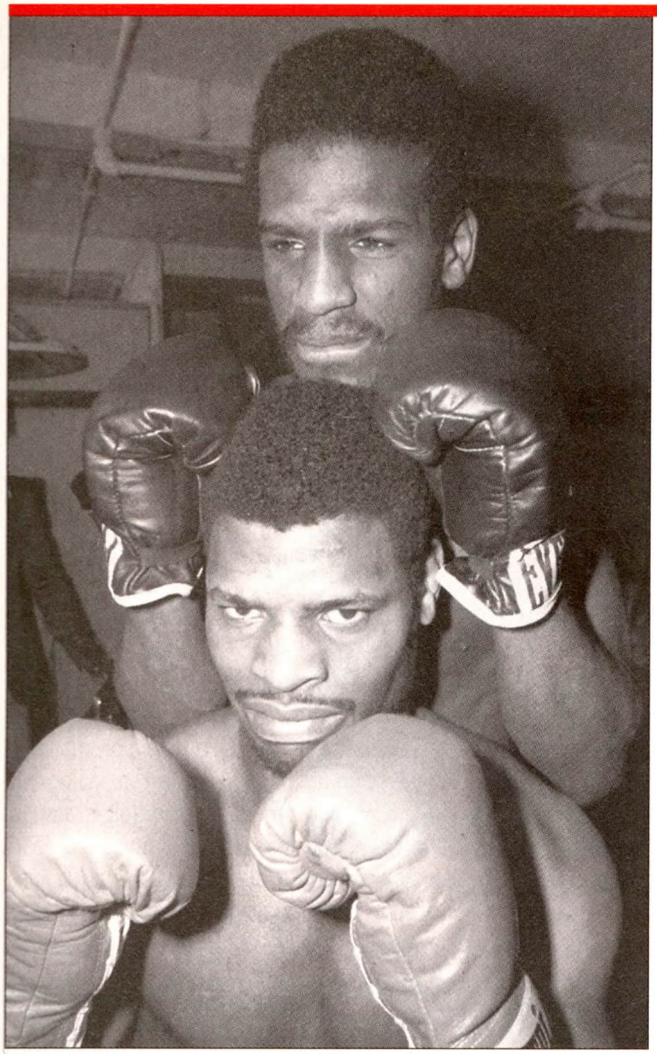
For starters, here's wishing that the sport can avoid being contaminated by the poison of performance-enhancing drugs. The latest cringe-inducing mention of a fighter juicing comes from Derryl Hudson, the former trainer of Shane Mosley. Hudson says that "Sugar Shane" knowingly used steroids prior to his 2003 rematch with Oscar De La Hoya.

The good news is that, these days, boxing is no longer the only bad kid in the class. Cherished baseball records have been tainted by steroids. The "Videogate" scandal exposed the New England Patriots as cheaters. The NBA has been trying to rebound, no pun intended, from a referee's admission that he bet on games he officiated. Tennis faces mounting evidence that gamblers rigged the outcomes of some matches. And track and field is full of more juicers than a Tropicana bottling plant.

The bad news is that boxing has blown a rare opportunity to stand taller than the rest of those aforementioned moral midgets. Hopefully, a combination of education, constantly improving testing methods with more widespread implementation, peer pressure, and media scrutiny will one day remove the clouds from a handful of guilty fighters' urine samples and thus remove the clouds of suspicion from everybody's bouts.

If the fight game wants to copy the other sports, it should do so not with those vile vials of human growth hormone, but by lifting a few pages from the other guys' rulebooks. Overtime (a 13th round if the scorecards are even after the 12th round of a title bout) and instant replay both make sense. And, no, utilizing videotape to determine if a punch landed low or a cut was caused by a butt won't create momentum-killing delays. Over the next 25 years, technology will probably advance to the point where the third man in the ring can review the replay on a high-definition television screen worn on his watchband.

As time marches on, that doesn't mean everything has to move forward, however. In fact, it might be a good idea to look to the past when it comes to scoring. The 10-point must system is flawed, and until judges everywhere become com-



By his golden anniversary, Ryan would like to see a movie about the Spinks brothers

fortable awarding 10-7 and 10-6 rounds routinely, it's really just a two-point must system anyway. Let's see the rounds system (with a supplemental points system in the event that the overtime round is never adopted) become the standard method of scoring, even in world title bouts.

Hopefully, over the next quarter century, the Sweet Science will have an undisputed heavyweight king for more years than it lacks one. That means either the alphabet organizations dry up and disappear like snails caught on a hot sidewalk, or THE RING champion and the king of the WBA, WBC, and IBF are always the same guy. Likely? Hell no. Even if unification tournaments were staged every couple of years, it will always be in the best interests of the alphabets to have separate titlists. Well, let's at least not compound the damage by creating a super heavyweight division, ala the Olympics. Please tell me my fears are unwarranted that the ruling bodies will come up with the new weight class for the Nicolay Valuevs, Sam Peters, and Wladimir Klitschkos, leaving smaller men like David Haye to compete for a greatly diminished heavyweight belt.

It would be awfully nice, too, if female boxing went the way of 15-round fights and cornermen slicing swollen eyelids with razor blades. The women's game, which first garnered serious attention when Christy Martin beat Deirdre Gogarty on the undercard of Mike Tyson-Frank Bruno II in 1996, has stagnated and remains little more than a novelty act over a decade later. There simply aren't enough talented women boxers to sustain a series of must-see matchups.

Two ladies, though, reluctantly get my support for a spot in Canastota: Martin, a pioneer, and Laila Ali, the best duke-out diva of all-time. If they do get voted in, it would be nice if it's the result of their accomplishments and not because they were helped by the International Boxing Hall of Fame's idiotic requirement that a minimum number of candidates gain entry each year. That rule has to go, ideally before this columnist celebrates his 26th anniversary in the trenches.

Here's wishing that over the next quarter century, boxing again becomes a presence on CBS, NBC, and ABC. It's easy to say that will never happen again in our lifetimes, and perhaps that's true. But 25 years is a long stretch and you never know. Work stoppages in other sports, like the 1982 NFL strike that saw games replaced by fight telecasts, could give boxing a chance to make a network comeback. Or, perhaps the corporate culture that marginalizes the fight game will change. Could anyone have predicted that pro wrestling, which practically disappeared from TV for years, would reemerge as a broadcast phenomenon? Or that FOX, which didn't even exist when kids of my generation were becoming sports junkies, would one day own the rights to the NFL and Major League Baseball? Keep the faith.

If those matinees of mauling don't return, then we'll hopefully be able to get our taste of Saturday afternoon fisticuffs at the Cineplex. If my wish comes true, the compelling stories of Tyson, Marvin Hagler, Roberto Duran, the Spinks Brothers, and others will eventually get the same top-notch screen treatment Jim Braddock's tale did in *Cinderella Man*.

And while we're talking about creative endeavors, here's hoping that boxing writers don't become virtually extinct one day, like seltzer deliverymen or guys who repair manual typewriters.

My concern isn't for my future. (If this column is still appearing on these pages 25 years hence, my financial planning didn't work out very well.) It's for the next crop of fight scribes—if there is one. Twenty-five years ago, there were more boxing periodicals on the newsstand and many newspapers had full-time writers on the beat. Today, the number of titles has shriveled and most papers can't afford to pay one of their reporters to devote his energy to boxing alone. Wire-service stories and coverage by writers with a limited knowledge of the game have become all too common.

There has to be a reason for young writers to want to dive into this sport, an infrastructure that helps them develop, and plenty of outlets for their creativity. But the odds are that if they start on the job today, they won't be drafting a column 25 years hence that talks about a quarter of a century spent continuously on the beat.

The true shame is that they won't even know what they missed. ■

By Ivan Goldman

CBS Enters Cage, Choosing Crud Over Quality

I have this dream—I know many readers share it—that one day boxing will return to prime-time, over-the-air TV, creating a new generation of fans whose surging numbers will yank the greatest sport back into competition for hearts, minds, and moolah against football, baseball, and basketball.

But recently, the cement-heads in corporate TV land have served us up a nightmare instead—cage fighting. Earlier this year, CBS signed a multi-year deal with an outfit called Elite Extreme Combat to put on a minimum of four shows each year live on CBS. The first was headlined by a "star" called Kimbo Slice who nearly lost to a guy who couldn't slip a punch if it were mailed third-class, James "Colossus" Thompson. Thompson showed up from Britain with a swollen left ear the size of a SmartCar. This is the sport that doomsayers predict will dance on boxing's grave? Gimme a break.

None of this would be so irksome if CBS didn't also own Showtime, which does in fact present boxing, sometimes in a very big way with phenomenal fights, including the entire Israel Vazquez- Rafael Marquez trilogy. So why can't we get any of these great shows moved to CBS, where its much larger audience could see something really worth watching?

I asked that question of Gary Shaw, who had a promotional piece of the Vazquez-Marquez trilogy. He's tried to sell boxing to over-the-air networks, he told me, but the result is always no sale. Bear in mind there are two Gary Shaws—the good Shaw who promotes boxing, and a bad Shaw who is director of the same Elite Extreme Combat group that put on Slice vs. Thompson. Bad Shaw is also president of Elite XC live events.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/ELITEXC

Goldman wonders what all the fuss was about Slice

Shaw reminds me of those corporate princes who, fearful of backing the wrong politician in a race, donate money to both of them.

Here's Shaw talking up an *HBO Boxing After Dark* card to maxboxing.com: "Look, there are people that watch the NFL Draft like it's the Academy Awards. It's because it's all new young guys coming up, new names. The NBA has it, and we need to do a much better job. Otherwise boxing will die on the vine."

Back up and take a good look at that message. While good Shaw spreads good news about the card, bad Shaw warns us of approaching doomsday—not just for that particular show, but for all of boxing. Carry out his wishes or the sport will be *dead*. Not in trouble, mind you, *dead*. Finito. Support his shows or the end is near.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOWTIME

Shaw (pictured with Marquez) had a promotional piece of the Vazquez-Marquez trilogy

Shaw pronounced these sentiments only days after 27,000 people paid their way into a soccer stadium in Carson, California, to see Oscar De La Hoya win an entertaining bout against Steve Forbes. But that, you see, wasn't a Shaw event. If he doesn't get a piece of the action, why, heck, the sport's going to *die*, man. But if boxing is a corpse, how come it drew all those customers?

True, the charismatic De La Hoya is another kettle of fish. He's an active boxer most people actually know exists.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

If boxing is sinking, why did 27,000 flock to see De La Hoya-Forbes?

There are probably only about three or four others. Kelly Pavlik and Miguel Cotto are getting pretty famous, but given their skills, their aggressive styles, and their character, they're not as famous as they deserve to be. And though Manny Pacquiao is a near-deity among both Filipinos and hard-core fans of all ethnic persuasions, it's ridiculous just how few members of the general public know he exists when you compare him, say, to whoever got thrown off *American Idol* recently.

The 2008 Super Bowl broke the record with 97.5 million viewers, while De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather scored a new high in boxing pay-per-view buys with 2.15 million—less than three-percent of the football total. But if the tables were turned—if the Super Bowl were pay-per-view and the fight was on Fox, I guarantee you only a fraction of the 97.5 million would have watched the game and the fight would have drawn several times the 2.15 million.

Also, try to imagine, fir example, a General Motors executive warning us if we don't buy some particular Chevrolet model that the car industry will expire. You can't. Auto executives make mistakes, but unlike boxing promoters, they tend not to say crazy stuff out loud.

It should be noted that the good Shaw also deserves credit for that doomsday card he referenced in his interview with maxboxing.com because in it, undefeated contenders James Kirkland, Alfredo Angulo, and Yuriorkis Gamboa were all impressive against serious opposition. But the bad Shaw really ought to lighten up on the-end-is-nigh forecasts. Doesn't it remind you of a brat who threatens to hold his breath if you don't buy him a $50 video game?

When I asked promoter Bob Arum about all this, he was optimistic that the crappy Slice-Thompson card, because it achieved good ratings, "could be very, very helpful. Maybe this will get networks to go back into boxing. That product itself was bad. Boxing, when it's presented right, is much more appealing."

Arum hopes over-the-air-network ignoramuses (my word, not his) will notice that boxing surged in both Mexico and Germany after it returned to free TV. Its ratings kick butt in both countries, Arum contended. "The only way boxing will flourish in this county is to get it back on free TV," he added.

Arum also castigated his sometimes-partner HBO for "wasting $20-million" on De La Hoya-Forbes and Bernard Hopkins-Joe Calzaghe. HBO, he said, "keeps buying old guys with names instead of developing young guys." I could mention that Arum promoted the second coming of old, old George Foreman and once called 45-year-old Foreman's kayo of Michael Moorer Arum's own "greatest career moment," but that would be a cheap shot.

Extra Help: Question for Shane Mosley, who's suing Victor Conte, steroid distributor and author of a forthcoming book, for slander over what he told newspapers about their relationship. Why did Mosley travel approximately 350 miles north to Conte's BALCO headquarters in the Bay area if all he wanted was vitamins and minerals? That's like going from Philadelphia to Boston for a beer.

Mosley, who admits taking Conte's steroids (they included injections directly into his stomach) before his second fight with Oscar De La Hoya, contends he didn't know they were steroids. Mosley's camp referred my question to his New York City attorney, Judd Burstein, who e-mailed me back

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

BALCO case continues to haunt Mosley

immediately saying that he and his clients don't discuss "facts pertaining to ongoing litigation."

"What I can tell you," Burstein said, "is that you will hear the explanation at trial." Burstein was pushing for the trial to start this summer, but the judge later said it won't happen that soon.

"I think the more interesting question," said Burstein in his e-mail, "is why Mr. Conte is so desperately trying to avoid a quick trial where it is Shane's burden to prove that Conte is lying."

Derryl Hudson, who helped train Mosley for the fight, supports Conte's assertions and is himself suing Mosley for defamation.

For his part, Mosley maintains his innocence. "I cannot begin to explain how devastating Conte's false accusations have been to me," Mosley wrote as part of a five-page declaration to the court.

Stay tuned.

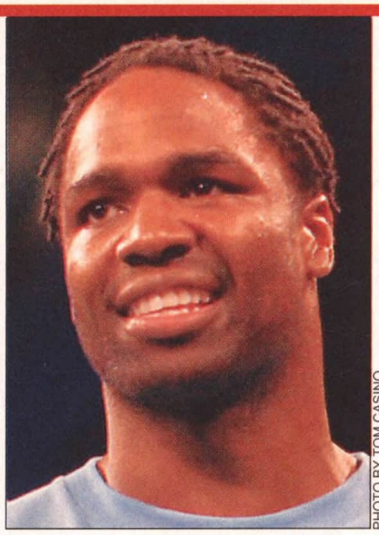


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Byrd: Too brave for his own good?

Courageous Byrd: The last thing southpaw Chris Byrd needed at light heavy was Shaun George and his slingshot right hand, but Byrd was never one to look for a soft touch.

Magoos: There's nothing like an action-packed four-rounder, but local junior welter Estaban Almaraz went down twice against Henry Lundy (who went down once himself) and not one judge on the ESPN2 show in Lincoln, Rhode Island, could find more than 37 points for loser Lundy? The unanimous decision for Almaraz smells like last week's fish. Judges: Wayne Lima, Walter Stone, Robert Paolino.

You'd have to dig deep in the dumpster to find worse officiating than reared its fetid self at Hatton vs. Lazcano in Manchester, England. First off, Hatton was knocked down clean in round three. He was hit with a left, and fell to the canvas without, as far as I could see, any extenuating circumstances. If that was a slip, the Titanic didn't sink. Magoo to referee Howard Foster.

Also, Lazcano had Hatton on Queer Street in rounds eight and 10, wobbling and desperate on rubber legs. In both rounds, you could make a strong case for a 10-8 score. Yet Magoo-winning judges Marcus McDonnell and Phil Austin had it 120-110 and 120-108, respectively. In other words, neither could bear to give their Mexican visitor so much as a round over homeboy Hatton. Pat Russell saw it 118-110, closer to the truth. Judges are instructed not to score a knockdown when the referee fails (or refuses) to see it. ■

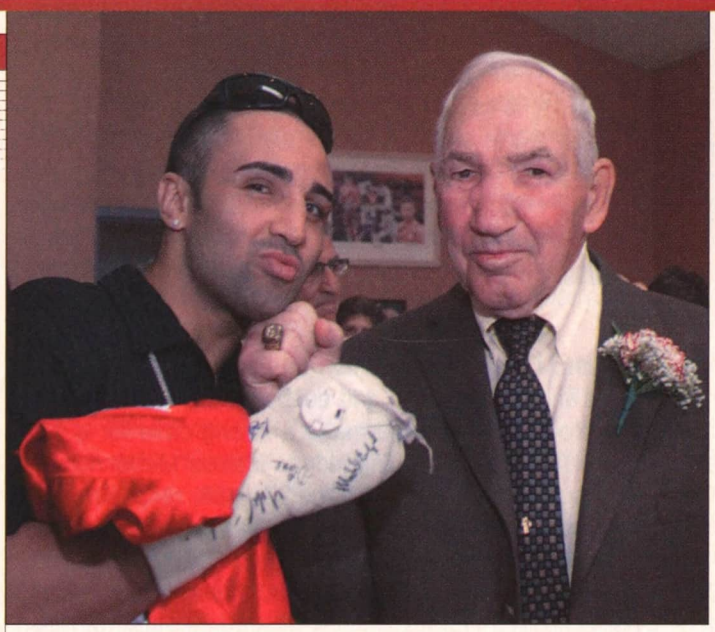
PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Foster watches Hatton hit the floor

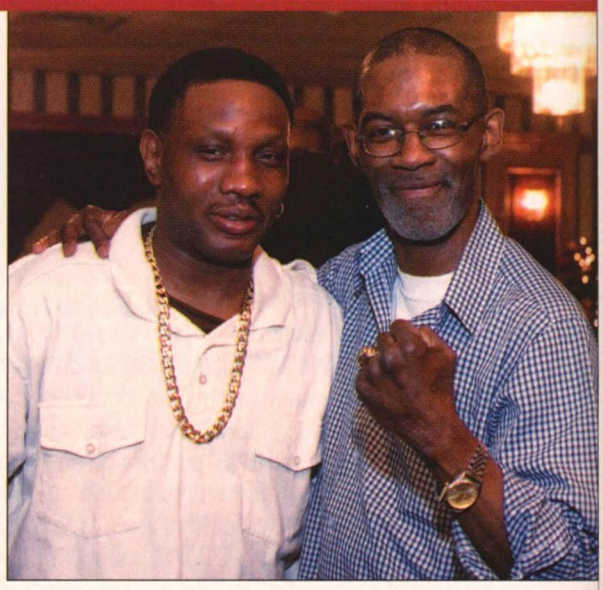
[Camera Clicks]

International Boxing Hall of Fame Induction Weekend, June 6-8, 2008

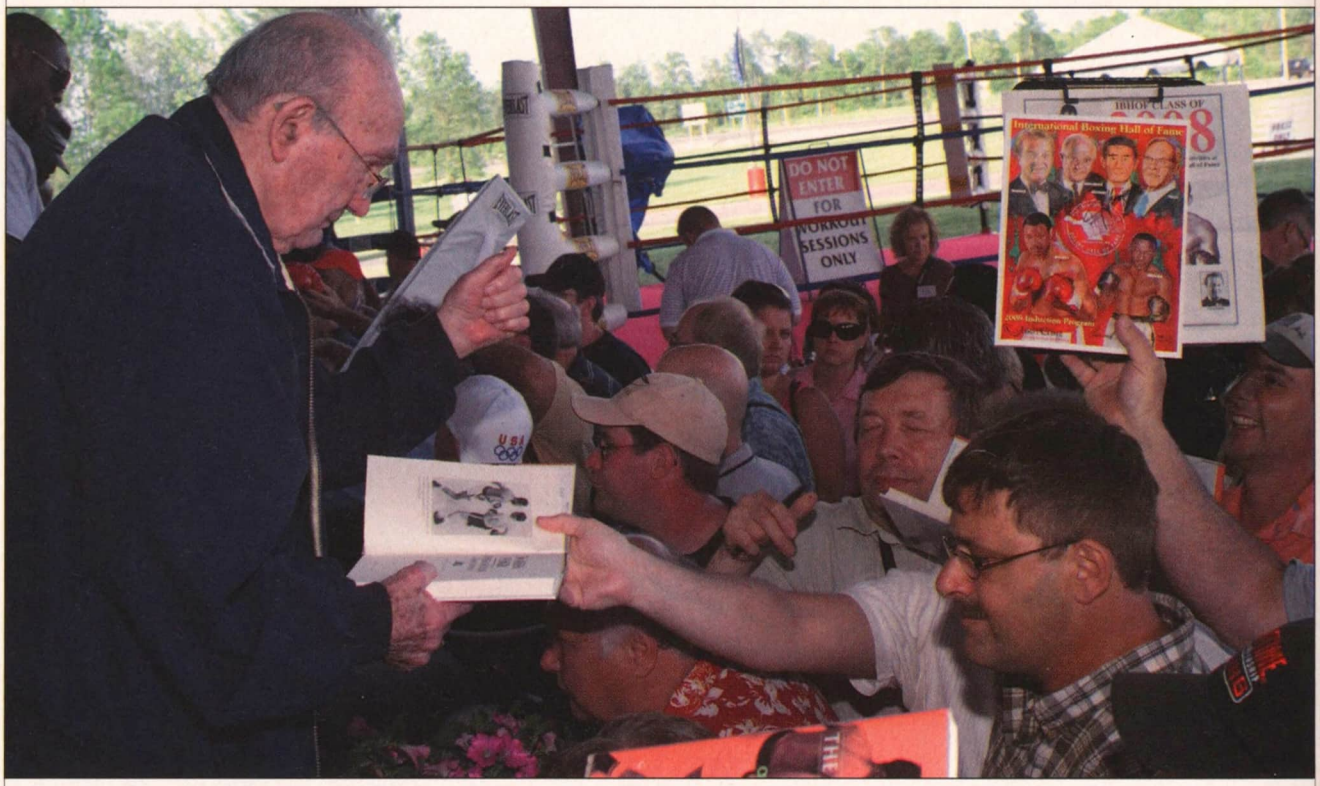
PHOTOS BY PAT ORR



Is it just us, or does tough guy Gene Fullmer have a look on his face that says he's pretty confident he could put on a pair of gloves right now and beat the attitude out of Paulie Malignaggi? Conveniently, both Malignaggi and Fullmer cut off their hair extensions shortly before this photo was taken.

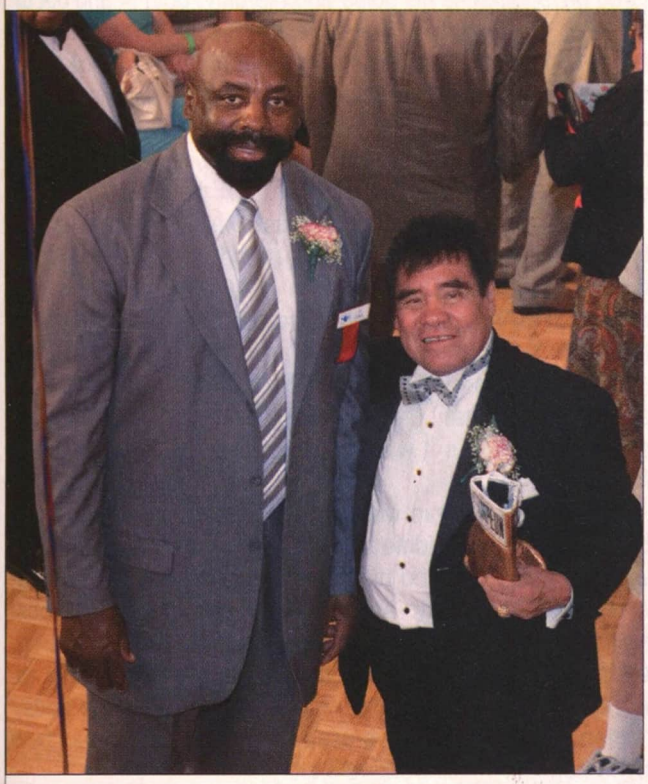


One of the stars of the induction class of 2007, Pernell Whitaker loved Canastota so much that a year later, he still hadn't left. Here, "Sweet Pea" is seen palling around with 2000 inductee Jeff Chandler, as the two debate whether Whitaker's defense was better than Chandler's offense (which eventually led to a "Tastes great, less filling" argument).



It's not an IBHOF Induction Weekend without an appearance from local Canastota, New York, hero Carmen Basilio, seen here signing copies of the 2007 release The Onion Picker: Carmen Basilio And Boxing In The 1950s. *Former welterweight and middleweight champ Basilio was part of the inaugural induction class in 1990.*

Given the textbook-perfect fighting stance his wife, Annie, can strike, it's no wonder Eddie Perkins has a few gaps in his smile. And showing off that smile was something Perkins did a lot of during Induction Weekend, since he became a Hall of Famer this year after decades of waiting for the call.



Okay, you get one guess as to which of these fighters was nicknamed "Too Tall." At 6'9", football-star-turned-boxer Ed "Too Tall" Jones makes Hall of Fame bantamweight and featherweight champ Ruben Olivares look more like Herve Villechaize than he would otherwise. Jones is far from a boxing Hall of Famer, but he can make one claim that Olivares can't: He retired from boxing with a perfect record, going 6-0 (5) during his three-month-long career.

One of the greatest middleweights ever, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, and one of the best cruiserweights in the game today, Steve "U.S.S." Cunningham, met up at the Hall in June. Will Cunningham someday join Hagler on the walls in Canastota? It's much too soon to say. But it's not too soon to tell Cunningham that Hagler has him beaten by a mile in the cool nickname department.

By William Dettloff

Alfredo Angulo Junior Middleweight

You couldn't blame Richard Gutierrez for the look he had on his face at the end. It betrayed a bit of the fuzzyheaded stupor we normally associate with mild concussion, but also complete incredulity. Just a few moments before, he'd rocked Alfredo Angulo back on his heels with a sweeping left hook, seemingly on the verge of gaining an edge in what had been up to that point a back-and-forth slugfest.

The next thing he knew, Angulo was hammering him all over the ring in a manner that suggested a mugging in which the muggee is reluctant to hand over his wallet and requires persuasion. Referee Tony Weeks ultimately handed it over for him, stopping it at 2:48 of the fifth round.

The HBO-televised card from Primm, Nevada, was supposed to be the coming-out party for Cuban defector Yuriorkis Gamboa. By the end of the night, there were more questions than answers about Gamboa, and the buzz was mostly around the undercard fighters—James Kirkland, who blew out Eromosele Albert in a round, and Angulo, who is making a name as one of the game's more exciting and promising prospects.

Along with Kirkland, Angulo has already built a following on Showtime's *ShoBox* series, scoring impressive knockouts in three appearances.

"What I noticed instantly about Angulo, and what separated him from most of the prospects we've featured on *ShoBox*, is his poise and maturity, both in and out of the ring," Showtime's Steve Farhood told The Ring. "He seems unflappable, and not only does his appearance belie his age—I still maintain that he's really 38—but his steady pressure style and calm under pressure do so as well. It's as if he knows he's good, and the rest of us will come around to that belief in time."

Angulo, who the record tells us is a mere baby at 25, fortified that calm as an amateur standout and member of the 2004 Mexican Olympic team in Athens, where he lost to Ireland's Andy Lee. Angulo recalls that time with mixed feelings.

"I had promised my mother I would get to the Olympics, so I was proud that I did that," Angulo told The Ring through an interpreter. "But it was hard because I was so far away from my family."

Angulo grew up in Mexicali with three sisters and two brothers (he's the middle boy). His father died when Angulo was five years old, and his mother worked tirelessly to feed and clothe her family. At eight years old, Angulo got jobs sweeping up in a motorcycle shop and at a market helping shoppers take groceries to their cars. He didn't have to work, he says. He did it "to help my mom." Then he adds, "When I was little, I always used to promise her I would buy her a house. I'm still working on it."

After turning pro, Angulo caught the eye of Connecticut-based manager Mike Criscio, who handles Chad Dawson and Kofi Jantuah, among others.

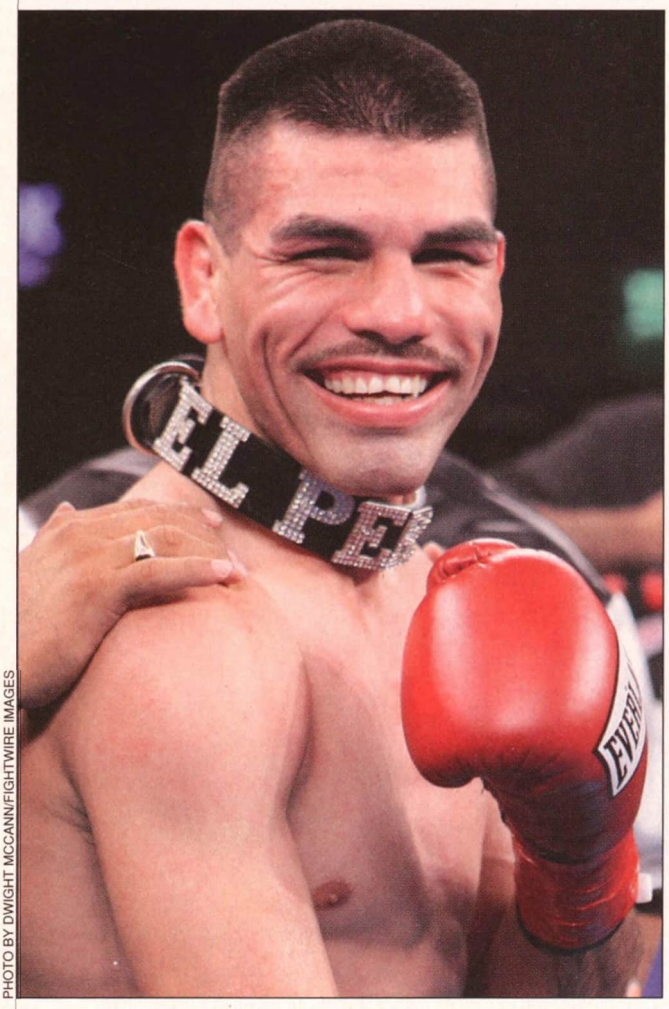
"We hooked up when I had a talent scout go watch him,"

(Continued on 116)

Pro Record

2005		
Jan. 6	Thomas Padron, Tucson, AZ	W 4
May 5	Jonathan Taylor, Tucson	KO 3
Aug. 25	Daniel Stanhisavljevic, Irvine, CA	W 6
2006		
March 3	Manuel Mada, Maywood, CA	W 4
July 14	Javier Arce, Mexicali, Mexico	KO 1
Sept. 1	Raymundo Valenzuela, Mexicali	KO 2
2007		
April 7	Lance Moody, Springfield, MO	KO 1
June 1	Israel Garcia, Santa Ynez, CA	KO 4
Aug. 4	Taronze Washington, Hidalgo, TX	KO 3
Sept. 7	Emmanuel Gonzalez, Santa Ynez, CA	KO 2
Nov. 30	Archak TerMeliksetian, Santa Ynez	KO 1
2008		
Feb. 1	Ricardo Cortez Hinckley, MN	KO 1
May 17	Richard Gutierrez, Primm, NV	KO 5

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
13	13	0	0	10



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★ Ken Norton
★ Sam Peter
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Pernell Whitaker
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Erik Morales
★ Vito Antuofermo
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
★ Terry Norris
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Virgil Hill
★ Gene Fullmer
★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
★ Hector "Macho" Camacho
★ Andy Lee

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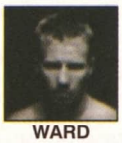

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Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

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Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

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LOVABLE, SUSCEPTIBLE BUT

Hatton's Earning Power Could Prove Costly

By Brian Doogan

They were five years old when they met at Mottram Primary School in Hyde, on the outskirts of Manchester, and it was more than 20 years later that Ricky Hatton and Jennifer Dooley became an item. "We didn't keep in touch, but I was good friends with Jenna, the girlfriend of Rick's brother, Matthew, [and] I was out with Jenna when I met Ricky," she explained about how they became reacquainted. Like every woman whose partner has chosen to climb

Even though he won a unanimous 12-round decision, Hatton's face (below) clearly shows that challenger Lazcano dished out quite a bit of punishment in a losing effort (opposite page). It's got to the point where there is genuine concern for Ricky's health if he continues to box.

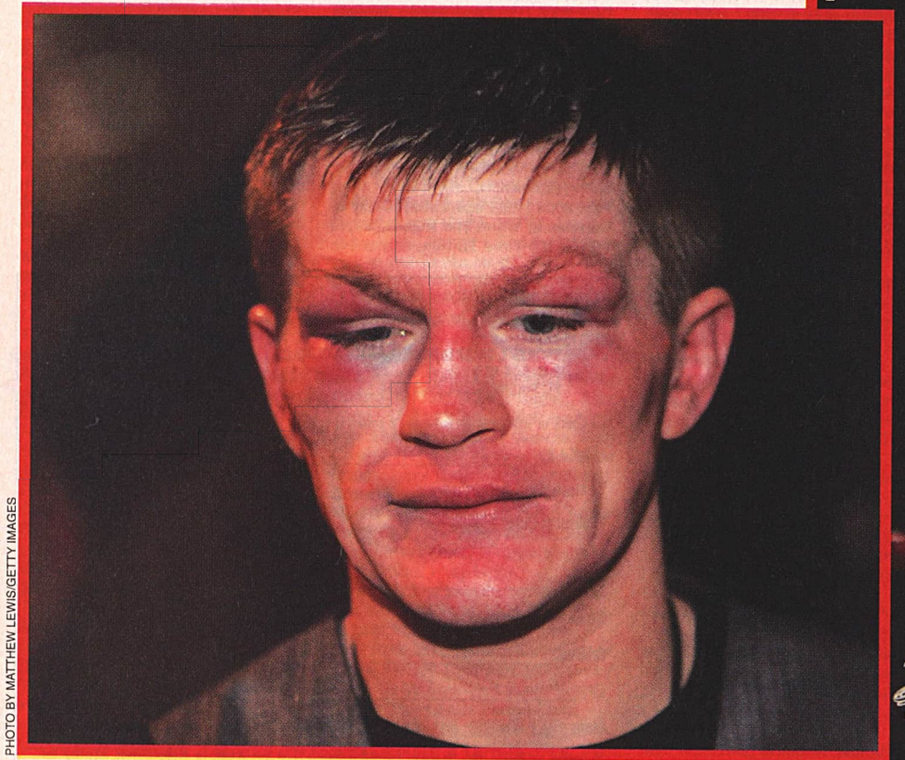

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PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Early in the fight, Hatton thrilled "The Homecoming" crowd of 57,000 that packed the City of Manchester Stadium with his usual harsh brand of bodypunching against Lazcano. But "The Hispanic Causing Panic" never appeared hurt.

into a boxing ring to earn his living, Dooley feels a unique kind of pain every time she sees her man get hit. Her last words to Hatton when she leaves his dressing room to take her seat at ringside are always the same, "See you after for a drink." Then she kisses him and whispers, "I love you." It is always, in her own words, "a very emotional moment."

Hatton credits his girlfriend—who gave up her job as a college lecturer at Manchester College of Art and Technology, when she was denied a holiday request last December so that she could attend the bout in Las Vegas between "The Hitman" and Floyd Mayweather—with bringing about some change to his notoriously errant lifestyle. "When Jennifer moved in, she asked me how long I'd been in my house," Hatton recalled in the week before encountering Juan Lazcano, his first contest since Mayweather pummeled him to his first defeat, inside 10 rounds. "I said, 'It must be 18 months,' and she couldn't believe it—the instructions for how to work the cooker were still inside the flamin' oven! When I lived on my own, it was takeaways seven nights a week and there's a big difference between takeaways seven nights a week and a little bit of home cooking. That difference between my girlfriend cooking a meal and me phoning up for spare ribs and salt and pepper ribs seven nights a week is eight or nine pounds, I would say."

So it was on May 24 that Hatton marched through a crowd of 57,000 raucous supporters at the City of Manchester Stadium dressed in a fat man suit and Dooley sat in the front row, alongside Hatton's mother, Carol, holding her hands up to her elegant face, which was gripped by naked fear. Hatton's bold statement was, as he promised, an uncompromising, "F___ you," message to critics who have frequently questioned his closeness to Messrs. Guinness and Dom Perignon, the greasy spoon cafes, and the Chinese takeaway, while Dooley's demeanor opened a window into the nervousness that both of them were feeling. In their own way, they were making themselves ready for what Hatton had described as "the biggest fight of my career," and in that moment their hearts beat as one. "I used to hate boxing," Dooley admitted once, and she did not appear

to be much in love with it as Hatton answered the bell to face one of the toughest examinations of his career—much tougher than anticipated, as it turned out.

"The Homecoming" represented a triumph for Hatton even before a punch had been thrown. Mike Tyson, the former world heavyweight champion, and Oscar De La Hoya, whose Golden Boy Promotions company has signed Hatton to a three-fight deal, led the celebrity names who were gathered at ringside, and the sellout crowd represented a post-war record for a fight in Britain, confirming that the 29-year-old's appeal has withstood the beating that Mayweather meted out at the MGM Grand Garden Arena last December. But whether Hatton, who retained the world junior welterweight title, which he won from Kostya Tszyu three years ago, will ever be the same again is a different matter. He was forced to survive several crises in his tough 12-round win against the California-based Mexican—in the eighth and 10th rounds, in particular—and these predicaments set alarm bells ringing.

"Hatton talked before last night of being on the home straight of his boxing career and he may now be heading for the tape sooner rather than later," Niall Hickman, who ghosted Hatton's autobiography, reported in the (London) *Sunday Express*. "Hatton won, but it was surely the first compelling evidence that his days at the very top, even in his natural light welterweight division, are closing in."

Colin Hart, the veteran boxing columnist for *The Sun* newspaper, delivered a damning verdict. "Hatton should do himself a big favor and tear up his three-fight contract with America's Golden Boy Promotions. It would mean giving up several more millions to add to his $30-million fortune, but if he's sensible and has any regard for his health and safety, it would certainly be a price worth paying. In more than 40 years reporting from ringsides, I've seen so many world champions climb through the ropes when they were in decline ... Watching Hatton beat Lazcano left me in no doubt Ricky is rapidly sliding down a slippery slope that could lead to a nasty crash. This is no time to pussyfoot around. Ricky is a shadow of the fighting machine who battered the great Kostya Tszyu so severely he quit on his stool and headed into retirement. That Ricky Hatton no longer exists. It appears that being flattened by Mayweather has done more harm to Ricky than he thought [and] I believe his binge-boozing and junk-food lifestyle has caught up with him."

Ray Hatton, who has managed his son's career since the bitter fallout with promoter Frank Warren following his victory over Tszyu, stayed focused on the future. "The fight against Paulie Malignaggi will be next, most likely in November," he said. "We don't know where at the moment, but it's looking like either Madison Square Garden or a venue in Vegas again. On the day after the fight, I was out with my grandson and we got a phone call from Floyd Mayweather's people to congratulate us on a great job done, a tricky fight out of the way. That was a call out of the blue and it was very, very nice that less than 24 hours after the fight they're on the phone saying, 'Good job, great show.'"

That Hatton was a comprehensive winner on points is beyond dispute. Marcus McDonnell (England), Pat Russell (U.S.), and Phil Austin (Australia) all scored for Hatton by 120-110, 118-110, and 120-108, respectively. THE RING saw it 118-110 for Hatton. But the ragged nature of his work left him open to Lazcano's punches throughout, especially in the second half of the bout, and the conclusion that Hatton's best is now behind him after 44 wins and one devastating loss is legitimate. Back in his natural domain at 140 pounds—having been unconvincing as a

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

A Lazcano left hook buckled Hatton's knees in the eighth and had The Hitman reeling. Hatton had controlled the fight until that point, but signs that he was slipping began showing as early as the third round.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Hatton came back from serious trouble in the eighth and 10th rounds. He regained the initiative to win going away, with all three judges scoring by large margins for Hatton. Hatton said he probably should have listened to trainer Billy Graham and boxed more.

welterweight against Luis Collazo and Mayweather, Hatton needed to demonstrate the all-consuming fire of old—but he was unable to put away Lazcano when he had him in trouble and he betrayed ominous vulnerabilities. His punch resistance appeared to be suspect and he walked into punches too easily. The timing was just not there in a lot of his work and his reflexes appeared to be slowed, inviting disaster, which almost befell him just beyond the midway point.

Lazcano had been scheduled to fight Hatton in April 2006, but injury had robbed him of his opportunity. A lightweight through the majority of his career, the 33-year-old Mexican, who lives in Sacramento, California, lost on points against future Hatton victim Jose Luis Castillo in a WBC title challenge in 2005, and another defeat on points to Vivian Harris in February 2007 left his career hanging in the balance. He bought a gym and opened a restaurant, and it was only the inducement of a bout against Hatton and one of his biggest ever paydays that convinced him to return to the ring and make the long journey from home.

Hatton, 139¾, looked cautious in the early skirmishes, but he landed a hard right hand high on Lazcano's head in the second minute, which precipitated a mean flurry of blows to the Mexican's head and body. Lazcano's primary concern was his own survival, so he offered little in the way of real retaliation, deciding instead to cover up as best he could and hold on whenever Hatton threatened to get close enough to land powerful combinations on the inside. A wide left hook grazed the right side of Lazcano's face early in round two and Hatton began to attack the body with conspicuous intent. A right hand to the ribcage unsettled the Mexican and Hatton was able to pick his shots almost at will because of the infrequency of Lazcano's punches. The Mexican did land a couple of left hooks to the side of Hatton's head, but Hatton answered back with another hard left hook to the jaw.

A sign of the problems to come arrived at the start of the third when Hatton slipped to the canvas after Lazcano, 139¾, landed a left jab, but British referee Howard Foster ruled that it was not a knockdown. A hard left hook rocked Hatton moments later, however, stopping him in his tracks. Lazcano, 37-5-1 (27), began to unload with damaging punches and, suddenly, Hatton was on the receiving end, needing to dig in late in the round to prevent Lazcano from taking over.

Significantly, Hatton had been unable to hurt Lazcano to this point and the visitor gave the strong impression in round four that he was beginning to fancy the job. He had further success with his left hook and also a right uppercut that went straight through Hatton's guard, but he left himself vulnerable in the

Malignaggi Survives A Hairy Experience

With his hair extensions falling into his face, courtesy of a Janet Jackson-type "wardrobe malfunction," Paulie Malignaggi, 139¾, Brooklyn, New York, struggled to suppress a sturdy challenge by Lovemore Ndou, 139, Sydney, Australia, via Transvaal, South Africa, before hanging on to his IBF light welterweight title at the City of Manchester Stadium. Even when cornerman Danny Milano cut the offending material right off during the interval between rounds eight and nine—surely the first haircut administered in a world title fight and, sadly for the image-conscious Malignaggi, not his best—he still did not look good.

Perhaps it was the Samson factor. Or maybe Malignaggi has accumulated a little too much credit for a courageous but ultimately, losing effort over 12 rounds against Miguel Cotto in June 2006. This was the second straight bout in which the brash New Yorker has performed unsatisfactorily after Herman Ngoudjo, the Montreal, Canada-based Cameroonian, hurt him and came close to beating him for the title in January.

"The Magic Man" has a bagful of tricks and he is a slick mover, but he is not an aesthetically pleasing performer, with too much of his punching having negligible impact. In the first round, his hair came undone, obscuring his vision and diminishing his prospects of landing sharply with his own punches and avoiding Ndou's. A former IBF beltholder, Ndou, 46-10-1 (31), had lost the title to Malignaggi by wide points decision in June 2007, losing practically every round on the judges' scorecards. But he was far more effective in the rematch, with Malagnaggi getting cracked on the jaw by a left-right combination in the third round and getting knocked out of his stride frequently in the ensuing rounds.

Malignaggi was never able to find his rhythm, even after his hair had been tied up in a ponytail by some hastily applied tape. Eventually, it was determined that his hair ought to be lopped off altogether (several days later, after returning to New York, Malignaggi just had it shaved off entirely). Malignaggi, 25-1 (5), suffered a further setback when he broke his right hand in the sixth round, having thrown a straight punch to the body, which caught Ndou's elbow. "From then on, it was a mess," he said. So was the fight, although Malignaggi did just enough to secure a match against Ricky Hatton in the fall. Phil Edwards scored 115-114 for Ndou, but Victor Loughlin and Dave Parris both saw it for Malignaggi by margins of 116-113 and 116-112, respectively. THE RING also scored for Malignaggi by 115-113. The referee was Mickey Vann and all of the officials were from the United Kingdom.

"Unfortunately, I've had this happen so many times that I knew it was broken," Malignaggi said. "Ricky Hatton better be ready in the fall. He didn't look at his best and I didn't fight my best. I expect both of us to bring our A game, but my A game is better than Hatton's and everybody will see that."

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

—B.D. *Malignaggi overcame a bad hair day to defeat Ndou*

process to a couple of left hooks and a bodyshot from Hatton, who managed to regain the initiative. There was swelling underneath his right eye when he came out for the fifth, but Hatton almost immediately landed a hard straight left to the chin that took an instant toll on Lazcano. A series of punishing lefts by Hatton drove Lazcano back into his own corner and he sustained more punishment to the body. In his eagerness to go for the finish, however, Hatton walked into a fierce right uppercut along the ropes and, momentarily, he was rocked.

He came back strongly in round seven, but a left hook to his jaw in the eighth caused his legs to betray him totally and, for an instant he looked like a drunk trying to walk along a tightrope, having dropped the balancing pole. He grabbed and held on to Lazcano and survived before he rocked the Mexican again with a left hook in the 10th. Then another left from Lazcano and a series of

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

The cost to raise his hand in victory came at a price for Hatton. He walked away with a swollen face and caused English veteran columnist Colin Hart to surmise that "Watching Hatton beat Lazcano left me in no doubt Ricky is rapidly sliding down a slippery slope that could lead to a nasty crash."

punches to the chin had a dazed Hatton in further trouble before the referee intervened, guided Hatton back to his corner, and issued instructions to his team to tie one of their fighter's boot laces, which had come undone. For Hatton, the minute-long respite could not have been more timely.

He turned the tables again in the penultimate round and stayed on top of Lazcano in the last to earn victory. Afterward, he expressed his delight. "The hardest one is out the way, coming back from Floyd Mayweather. I've never been more nervous about a boxing match in my life," he said. "I felt great in the gym, but it's different once you get in there with all those demons in your mind asking the question, *Can I come back as strong?* There were about three or four times in the fight when I thought I had him, but he was brave and he showed that he's a world-class opponent. If I wanted to box my way to a points victory, I could have come through a lot more comfortably, but he was able to catch me when I should have been listening to my trainer, Billy Graham, who told me just to box because I was way ahead on points. But that's my style. I take risks, I'm a fighter and this is why the stadium was filled by so many people here tonight. They all knew that they would see a fight.

"He did hurt me with a few shots without really shaking me. He had his moments, but I knew exactly where I was all the time. It's all about surviving the moment, which I did. I won every round and showed good boxing ability. But when I stepped on the gas, that's when I got in trouble. I always go for the knockout and that can happen, but I think that's what people love about me."

The question now is whether Hatton's career will end in tears or in the blaze of glory that he craves. While his continued condemnation of the performance of referee Joe Cortez in the Mayweather fight is not without merit, he appears to be slightly delusional about the possibilities that a proposed rematch next year at Wembley might bring. "I don't think that I was comprehensively beaten at all," Hatton suggested. "I thought that the fight was in the balance. Don't get me wrong, I was knocked out in the 10th round and you can't get more comprehensive than that, but it was only the last couple of rounds when it started to fall apart. Up to round six, there was nothing in it."

Nothing except Mayweather's supreme ring intelligence and precise, damaging punches that, simply and brutally, were too much to overcome, especially when Hatton's aggressive efforts to smother his opponent proved largely ineffective after the early rounds. A rematch could only result in more of the same, though the payment would handsomely compensate Hatton for the punishment.

But he is not a welterweight and, besides, he must beat Paulie Malignaggi first. "Ricky is a bigger star in the United States than before he lost to Floyd Mayweather because he is a real person. He is extremely humble," said De La Hoya. "There is tremendous interest from Las Vegas and New York for him to fight there next and I'm sure that his team will come up with the right location."

No doubt they will, but it is Hatton's ability to come up with the right formula for success that is the burning issue. However Hatton deals with it, one thing is certain: It will be another uneasy night for Jennifer Dooley. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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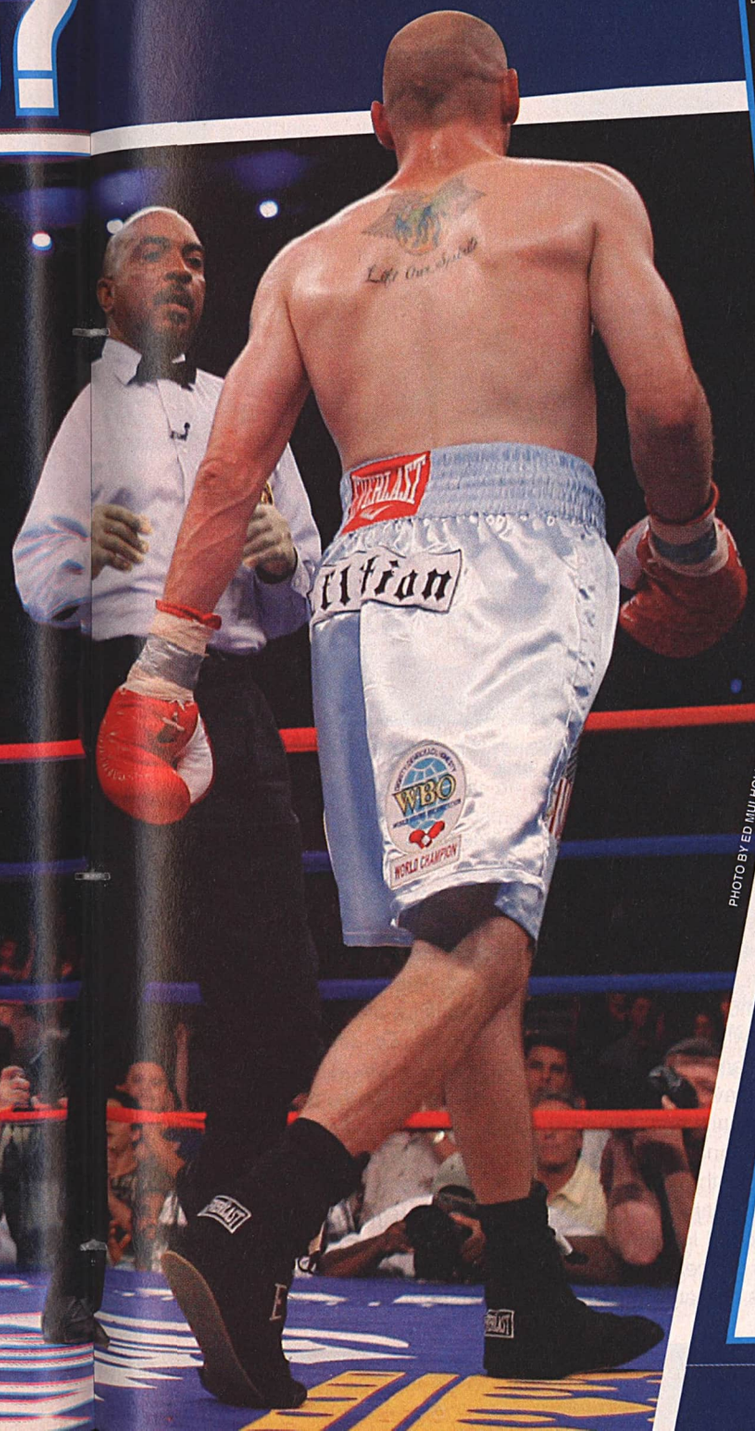
WHICH WEIGH SHOULD HE GO?

Kelly Pavlik Must Choose Whether To Chase More Championships Or Defer And Defend



Referee Eddie Cotton sends Pavlik to a neutral corner after Lockett absorbs a right and takes a knee (below). The British challenger was down three time before the mismatch was mercifully stopped in the third round. Shortly after the fight was over, Pavlik saluted the many fans who traveled from Youngstown, Ohio, to watch his first defense of the middleweight championship (right).

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

By Eric Raskin

Here's a question to which there are no wrong answers: Would you rather be the next Bernard Hopkins or the next Roy Jones?

Kelly Pavlik would naturally be thrilled to have a boxing career as productive, prolific, and profitable as either one of those all-time greats. But just one year and one defense into his title reign as middleweight champion of the world, he's reached a point where he must choose whose path he wishes to follow.

Jones became king of the 160-pounders

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

As is usually the case, Pavlik's potent right hand was his biggest weapon, and Lockett hit the canvas virtually every time he was tagged with it. Pavlik's ability to end a fight with one or two clean shots is one of the major factors in his rise to fame.

by defeating, ironically enough, Hopkins, on May 22, 1993. One year later, he defended his title via easy knockout over Thomas Tate. Then he quickly moved up in weight, took the biggest fight available and defeated James Toney, won titles in four divisions total, and achieved legendary status without cementing himself as a middleweight for the ages.

Hopkins won his piece of the middleweight title on April 29, 1995, defended his belt via easy knockout over Steve Frank, had plenty of opportunities to move up (in both 2000 and 2002, he was negotiating for a rematch with then-light heavyweight champ Jones), but stuck around at 160 pounds to make 20 successful defenses over a 10-year span. He eventually moved up after losing his title and added a championship in a second division, but his legendary status is based mostly on what he did at middleweight, where he set records for title defenses and length of reign.

Both paths—leaving middleweight at the first opportunity and staying at middleweight as long as possible—worked out nicely for the fighters. Jones and Hopkins each enjoyed time atop the pound-for-pound lists and ought to be unanimous choices of the voters when their names appear on the Hall of Fame ballot. Jones made a choice that was right for him, and Hopkins made a choice that was right for him.

Now it's Pavlik's turn to make a choice. He's made his one easy defense by knockout, over Gary Lockett. It's decision time. Does he want to be Jones? Or does he want to be Hopkins?

In a sense, it's the classic question of fish size and pond size. And whatever division Pavlik chooses, the biggest fish are located across the pond.

At middleweight, where Pavlik holds THE RING championship as well as two alphabet belts, the other two beltholders are both based in

Germany: Arthur Abraham (who had a tough defense in a rematch against former Pavlik victim Edison Miranda scheduled for just after this magazine's press date) and Felix Sturm. In fact, six of THE RING's top eight contenders are European, and the only "name" fighter ranked highly in the division is Winky Wright, who has been inactive for about a year. At 160 pounds, there are decent fights for the champ—certainly, there are dozens of options better than Lockett—but there is no superfight, there is no bout that can justifiably be aired on pay-per-view, and there's nobody Pavlik wouldn't be favored to beat.

One division to the north, there is a pay-per-view-worthy superfight against a fighter Pavlik wouldn't be favored to defeat. THE RING super middleweight and light heavyweight titles are both held by Joe Calzaghe of Wales.

This wouldn't just be Pavlik's chance to do what Jones did in moving up and beating Toney; this could, potentially, be Pavlik's chance to do something nobody has done since Henry Armstrong in the 1930s. If Calzaghe enters the ring with both titles, and the fighters both weigh in at 168 pounds or less, a Pavlik win would give "The Ghost" three legitimate world championships at the same time. For decades, Armstrong's three-divisions-at-once feat has been believed to be something that could never be equaled, like Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak or Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game. By fighting Calzaghe, Pavlik would have a chance to do some serious hammerin' at history.

At the conclusion of HBO's broadcast of the Pavlik-Lockett fight, color analyst Max Kellerman weighed in with his opinion on whether Pavlik should choose what's behind door number 160 or door number 168.

"You're the middleweight champion of the world, the onus is on you, clean out the division before you fight Joe Calzaghe," Kellerman said.

Pat Lynch, who expertly guided the career of Arturo Gatti and won the Manager of the Year award from the Boxing Writers Association of America in 1997, agrees with Kellerman.

"If he doesn't have problems making the 160-pound limit, I would probably stay at middleweight and clean up for a little while," said Lynch, who was ringside at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City for the three-round Lockett blowout. "I know making weight can be an issue. There were times with Arturo where we wanted to stay at a certain weight, but he just couldn't make it anymore. But if Pavlik can make it without hurting himself, I

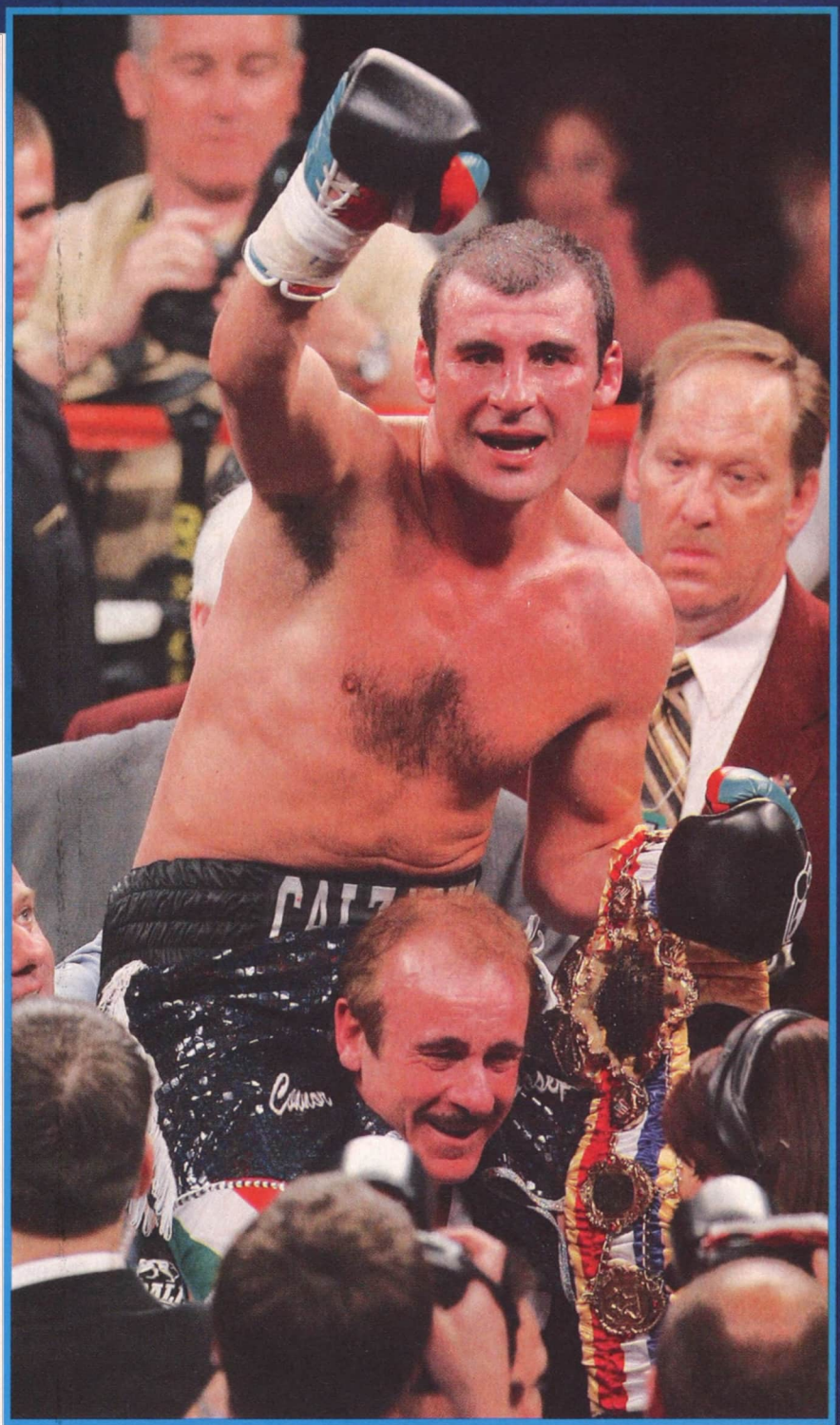


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Calzaghe celebrates his victory over Bernard Hopkins, which added the light heavyweight championship to the super middleweight title he already owned. There has been a lot of talk of an eventual Calzaghe-Pavlik match, but it looks like the Welshman will probably fight Roy Jones next.

Rocket Man (I Think It's Going To Be A Short, Short Fight)

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Sometimes, a fighter who has been inexplicably elevated to a number-one alphabet rating turns out to have world-class ability to go along with his unearned mandatory status; take junior welterweight Timothy Bradley, for example. More often, a ridiculous mandatory challenger turns out to be ridiculously outclassed, and Gary "The Rocket Man" Lockett, whose best victories came against the journeyman likes of Ryan Rhodes and Gilbert Eastman, predictably fell into that category when he challenged Pavlik for the world middleweight championship in front of 7,168 fans at Boardwalk Hall on the WBO's orders.

Pavlik, 159, looked very relaxed from the outset. He landed jabs and quick right-left combinations with ease, and with about a minute to go in the opening round, the champion landed a hard right, a jab, and another right, stunning Lockett, 159½, Cwmbran, Wales, and backing him into a corner. To his credit, Lockett fought back and landed a clean counter right hand, earning a measure of respect from Pavlik.

The moment of success faded quickly, however, and in the second round, The Rocket Man began touching down. The 6'3" Pavlik pumped in a series of powerful jabs, then connected with two heavy right hands that prompted Lockett, 31, to drop to a knee. He rose at American referee Eddie Cotton's count of eight and threw punches back admirably, but the Ohioan scored with a hard left-right and a left to the body before a quick right hand convinced Lockett to take another knee. He again rose at eight and the bell rang before Pavlik could do more damage.

Lockett landed a couple of left hooks early in round three, but the vicious punching champ scored with another left-right combination, and again Lockett, 30-2 (21), went down to one knee. He again rose at the count of eight, but this time, his trainer, Enzo Calzaghe, threw in the towel, ending the charade at the 1:40 mark. CompuBox stats credited Pavlik with more punches landed, 92, than Lockett threw, 89.

"All he did tonight was try to catch me getting lazy with the jab," Pavlik said afterward. "He did catch me with one clean right hand in the first round, but other than that, we took care of it."

If only Pavlik could take similar care of the folks at the WBO who decided Lockett was the number-one middleweight contender in the world.

Television: **HBO**

Promoters: **Top Rank, Sports Network**

(6-7-08)

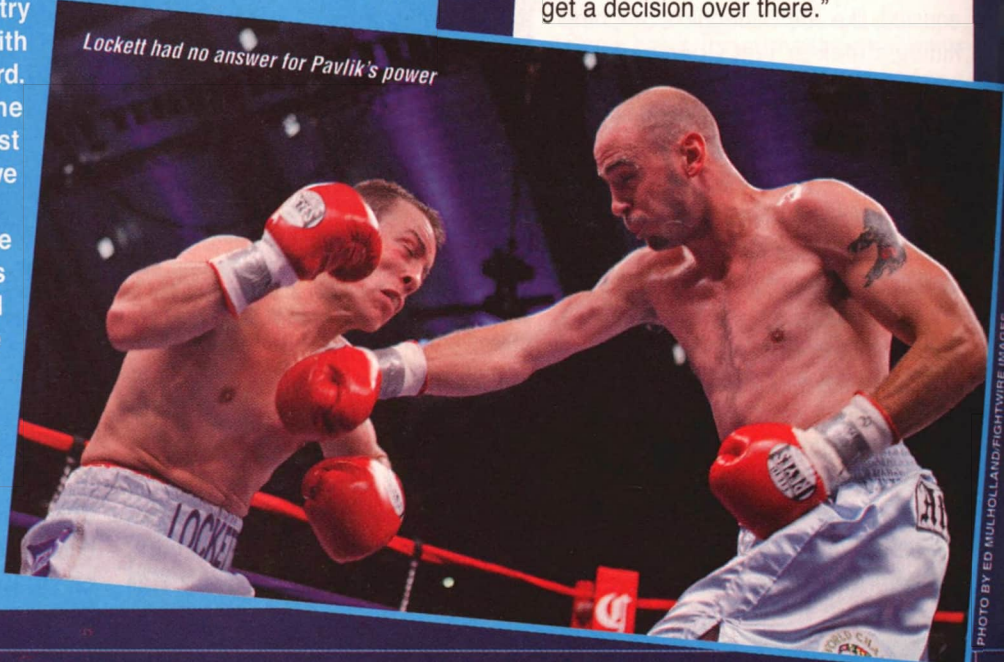
—E.R.

would stay there and clean it up, because he definitely can clean that whole division up, and assume or hope that the Calzaghe fight will still be there a year or so down the road."

That assumption/hope is critical to the decision. There have been murmurs emanating from the Calzaghe camp that Joe wants just one more fight before retiring. If that turns out to be the case, then Pavlik won't have the luxury of cleaning up middleweight *and* moving up for that big-money fight.

Though Pavlik promoter Bob Arum talked immediately after the Lockett fight about an October 18 battle of unbeatens against the Welshman, it's no secret that Calzaghe and his team would prefer a fight against the faded but still famous Jones. There's probably more money in a Jones fight, and it seems an easier match for Calzaghe, taking on a twice-kayoed 39-year-old rather than a gutsy, hungry, hard-punching 26-year-old. But negotiations with Jones are always, *ahem*, interesting, so Pavlik remains at least an intriguing Plan B for Calzaghe.

"I'll fight anybody," Pavlik, 34-0 (30), said at the press conference following the Lockett fight. "I'll go over to Wales, as long as HBO comes along with me, because you really have to put a guy on the stretcher to get a decision over there."



Lockett had no answer for Pavlik's power

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE.COM

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Pavlik can generate a lot of power with his right hand. Should he decide to move up in weight, it will be interesting to see if his punches have the same deadly effect against super middles and light heavies.

Whether that's fair to say or not, one thing that's undeniably true about fighting in Wales is that it makes it difficult for Pavlik's legion of hometown fans from Youngstown, Ohio, to come see him. In two fights in Atlantic City, Pavlik's title-winning affair against Jermain Taylor and the Lockett exhibition, the Youngstown faithful by the thousands have made the seven-hour drive. But there are no roads that lead all the way to Wales. Fortunately for the Youngstowners, in stark contrast to a fight at Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, there's also talk of a homecoming defense somewhere in Ohio (Youngstown is about 75 miles from the large arenas and stadiums of Cleveland).

"I think the move right now, and Bob Arum has talked about this, is to go out to the Youngstown area and fight right in his backyard," Lynch opined. "You bring him there, forget it, he would just rock the place out there. They're probably salivating for that right now. You could do it in a 20,000-seat arena. I went to one of his weigh-ins, for the Taylor fight, and I couldn't get over it. The crowd at the weigh-in was amazing. This kid has that appeal, where his fans have just fallen in love with him."

One concern, however, is that the appeal may begin to plateau if Pavlik fights any more opponents of Lockett's caliber. And, sadly, that's one of the options under consideration. If a Calzaghe fight can't be made, and it's decided that a fight against an Abraham or a Sturm needs more time to simmer, possibilities include Marco Antonio Rubio, a journeyman who was infamously starched in one round by Kofi Jantuah in '04, and Giovanni Lorenzo, who, like Lockett, has become an alphabet mandatory without defeating any contenders.

One defense against a challenger like Lockett, who was listed as an underdog at anywhere from 10-1 to 20-1, can be stomached. But a repeat of that sort of mismatch is likely to repeat on even the most iron-stomached fight fans.

Looking at it from a mainstream perspective, Pavlik's popularity may actually begin to plateau if he fights anyone at middleweight other than Oscar De La Hoya (which isn't realistic) or Wright. If Abraham has beaten Miranda by the time you read this, "King Arthur" will clearly be the most deserving challenger at 160 pounds, but he's not exactly a household name on American shores. Turning him back would earn Pavlik some extra respect among the hardcores, but the casual fans don't

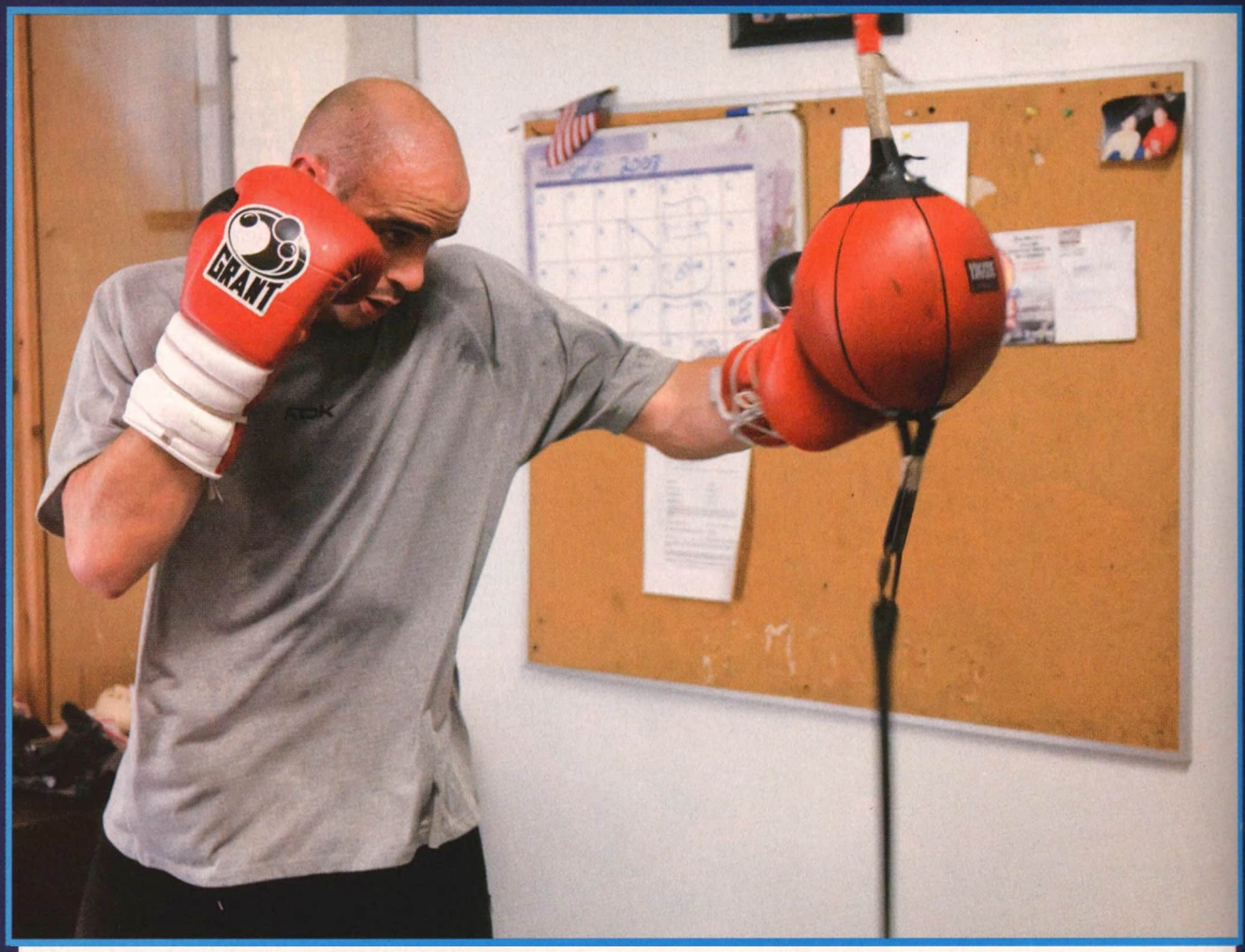


PHOTO BY GARY SARTI/FIGHTWIRE IAGES

Like most successful fighters, Pavlik's work ethic is another important factor in his climb to the top. He still does the bulk of his training at the Youngstown's Southside Boxing Club, where he developed his relentless style under the tutelage of coach Jack Loew.

know Abraham from Adam. Or from Lockett, for that matter.

If there's a compelling reason to stick around middleweight, it's not the current crop of contenders, but rather the potential future contenders. It may be a year or two or three away, but the young star welterweights like Miguel Cotto and Paul Williams will probably be middleweights someday (the rail-thin 6'1" Williams seems a particularly likely candidate). You may recall that Marvin Hagler's biggest paydays at middleweight came after he waited for Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns, and Sugar Ray Leonard to move up, and that Hopkins didn't really cash in until Felix Trinidad and De La Hoya became 160-pounders. If Pavlik can continue making the weight—against Lockett, he tipped the official scales at 159 and weighed 170 unofficially on fight night, suggesting he's neither undersized nor oversized for the division—and remain champion, he will be the logical target of the smaller superstars eventually.

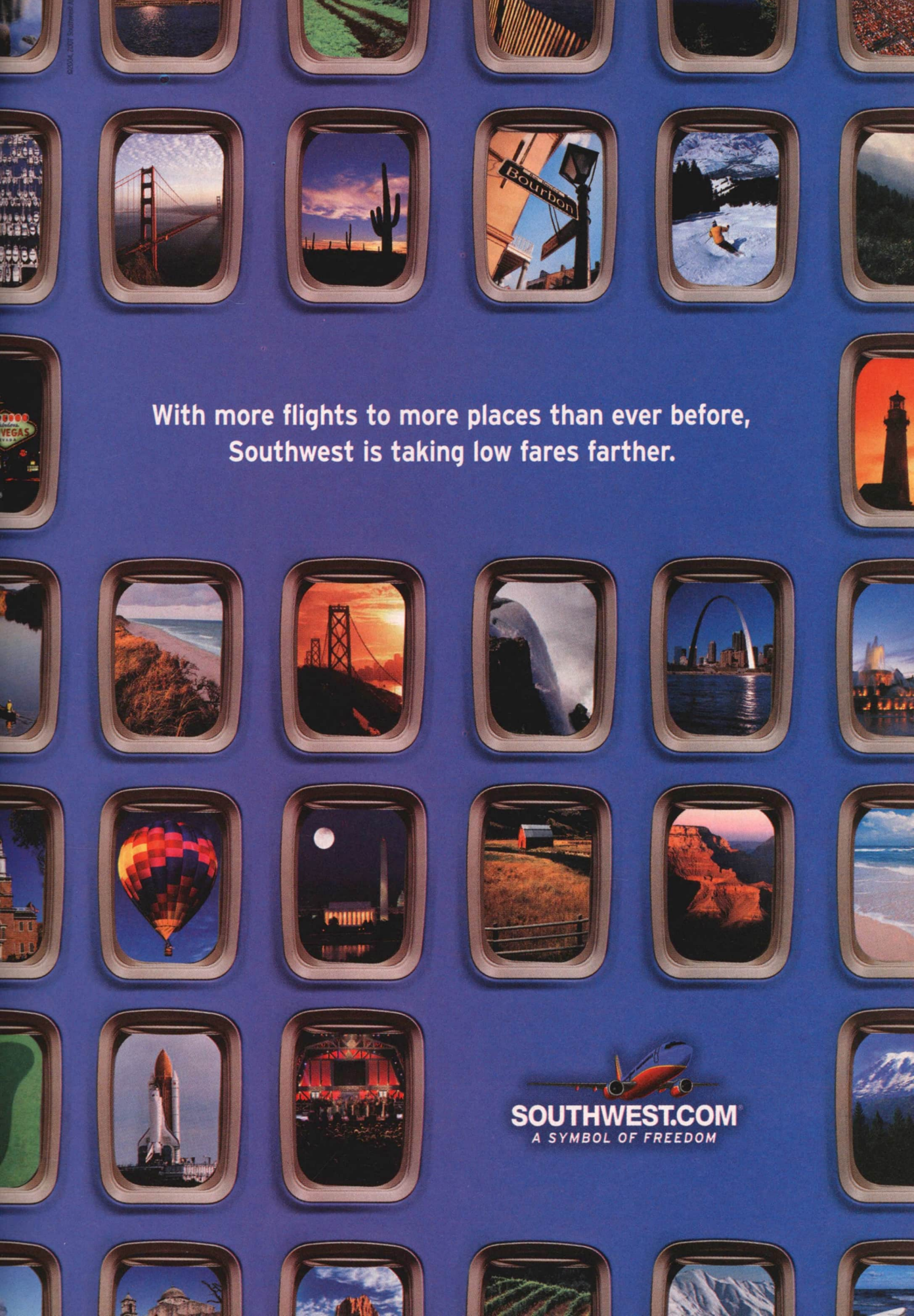
There are many layers to the question of what Pavlik should do. Should he be concerned with the short-term or the long-term? Should he be focused on the hardcore fan base or the mainstream fan base? As it concerns taking care of business at middleweight first and then meeting Calzaghe sometime next year to attempt something historic, can he have his cake and eat it too?

One thing we shouldn't lose sight of is that, for all of the declarations that Pavlik is the new face of American boxing in a post-De La Hoya and post-Mayweather world, he hasn't really proven yet that he matters outside of Youngstown and he certainly hasn't proven that he can sell on pay-per-view. After all, the rematch with Taylor, Pavlik's only foray into headlining PPVs, produced just fewer than 250,000 buys, well shy of expectations.

That isn't to say that Pavlik won't be the new face of American boxing. He certainly seems the sport's brightest hope, a smart, charismatic, entertaining, talented, and undefeated fighter. He's generated plenty of buzz in the past 18 months. But there's still a very long way to go. So each move he makes, in terms of matchmaking, is critical.

Maybe he'll stay put at middleweight long enough to break all of Hopkins' records, or maybe he'll vanquish Calzaghe and take a seat alongside Armstrong.

If Pavlik is a great enough fighter to pull off either feat, then whichever decision he makes will be the right one. ■



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Dan Campbell (above, far left) has a heavy burden ahead of him in leading the United States Olympic boxing team out of a 20-year funk. Team USA will be counting on returning Olympians like Rau'shee Warren (opposite page), the first U.S. boxer eliminated at the Athens games four years ago.

CAN AMERICA REVERSE ITS OLYMPIC BOXING WOES?

The Ring Profiles The 2008 Team

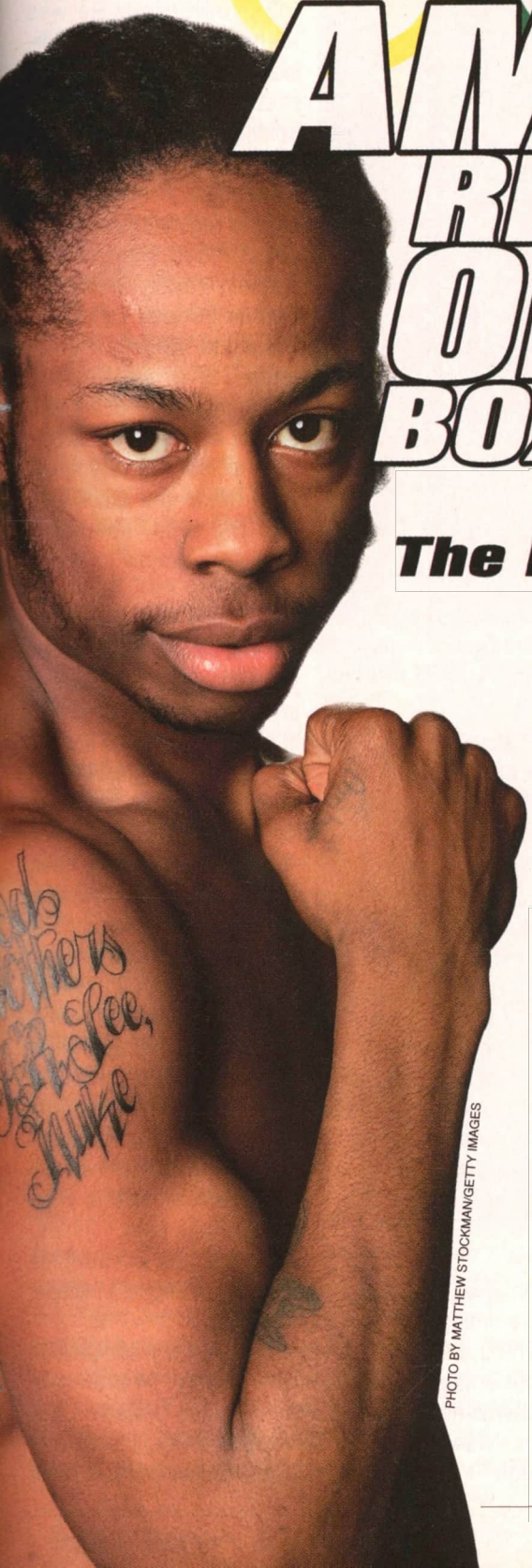


PHOTO BY MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES

By David Mayo

They are young men of great strength, average age 20, and include the first two-time United States Olympic boxer in more than three decades, a father who quit college basketball to care for an ailing daughter, the Americans' first two winners at the World Amateur Championships since 1999, and the first Arab-American representative in team history.

Now, they shoulder their biggest burden to date, the responsibility for reversing fortunes of a declining monolith they did nothing to diminish in the first place.

The U.S. has won three gold medals since the 1988 team won that many itself. In

the last four Olympiads, Cuba has won more golds in one division, heavyweight, than all Americans at all weights. But it isn't just the Cubans, with 20 gold medals in the last four Olympiads, or Russians, with seven, causing the Americans problems. Kazakhstan also leads the U.S. in the same span, with four golds. Thailand has three.

Not exactly fit to be Thai-ed, the American coaches and U.S.A. Boxing officials—pilloried for two decades of poor production, which contributed largely to the Olympic sport's relegation to a second-tier cable network—responded in 2004 with the controversial decision to assemble the team a year in advance. That trend continued this Olympiad, with team trials concluded in August 2007, two days shy of a year before the Beijing Games end.

The scrutinized head coach, Dan Campbell, has relied heavily on predecessors. Basheer Abdullah, the 2004 U.S. Olympic head coach, is Campbell's technical adviser, so they talk weekly. But Campbell said he also regularly seeks advice from, among others, past national coaches Al Mitchell, Israel Acosta, Joe Zanders, Anthony Bradley, and Mike Stafford.

"There's a lot of pressure," said Campbell, who was hired in 2005 as national director of coaching. "Not much sleep, a lot of traveling, not eating right. But I knew that going into this. I got a lot of counsel from the former Olympic coaches, who are all friends of mine. I stay in touch with them and I really listen to their guidance. I think it's going to take us a long way, because what I've really tried to do is put my ego to the side and really listen to the guys who have been there."

Campbell said he doesn't agree with everything his colleagues stress. Likewise, not all former Olympic coaches agree with U.S.A. Boxing's method.

"To have a team of young athletes together for a year is crazy," said Mitchell, the 1996 head coach. "Kids hate to be confined for long periods of time. It isn't prison, but to those guys, it seems like prison. Being stuck together for more than a year is just like lockup to them."

Mitchell also said if U.S.A. Boxing would move the Olympic Trials back to late-winter of the Olympic year, allowing for another U.S. Championships cycle before the team is determined, the American squad might be refreshed by a six-month camp before Beijing, and would have a different makeup.

"They lost two or three athletes, I guarantee you, because of the timing of the Trials," Mitchell said. "There are always some young guys who come out of the woodwork. This year was no different. I know names, but I don't want to say. They know it, though."

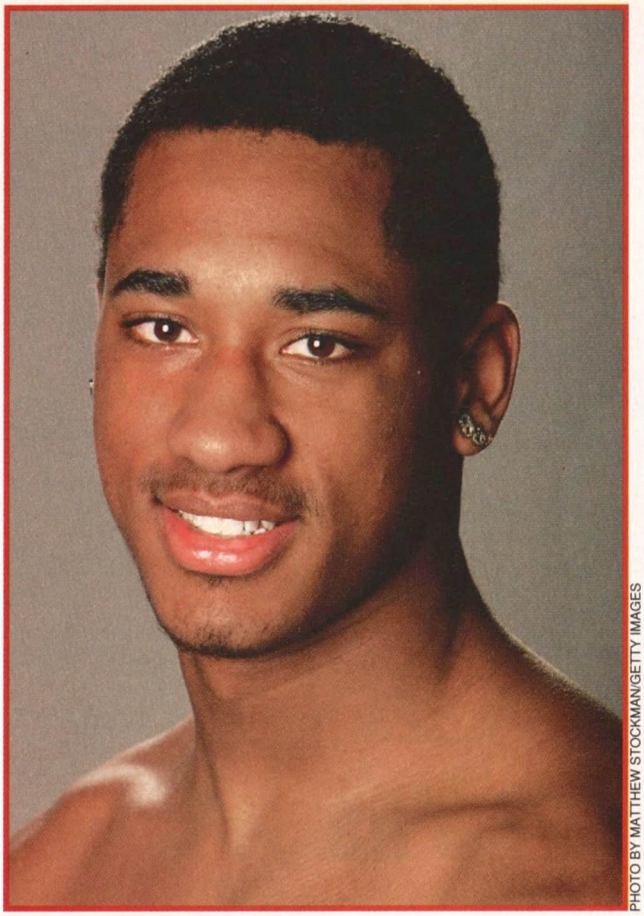


PHOTO BY MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Demetrius Andrade is one of the top medal contenders on the U.S. team. The 20-year-old welterweight won the World Amateur Championships.

For Rau'shee Warren, none of those broader factors affecting American amateur boxing matter now.

The 21-year old from Cincinnati was the first U.S. boxer eliminated in Athens four years ago. He was teenaged and torn. Americans virtually are unified in their belief that amateur boxing ends at the Olympic Games, a position that has contributed to the country's lack of recent Olympic success. Floyd Mayweather, Jermain Taylor, Chris Byrd, Vernon Forrest, Eric Morel, Fernando Vargas, and Antonio Tarver were among the many U.S. boxers who did not win gold medals during the last four Olympics, then made the quick leap into the pros. Imagine if they stuck around for a second try.

Warren did, becoming the first two-time U.S. Olympian since Davey Armstrong in 1972 and 1976.

"I thought about it, man. But the timing for going pro wasn't right," Warren said. "My mom and my coach pushed me to go for another Olympics. Now that I look back, it would have been hard being a 17-year-old pro flyweight. They convinced me to go for another Olympics, and they were right."

Warren, a light flyweight in Athens, moved up to flyweight and won a world title last year in Chicago, which established him as a favorite in Beijing. In addition to the maturity gained from his first Olympic experience, Warren also became the U.S. team's third father earlier this year, when Rau'shee Jr. was born.

For most of the last decade, his focus has been international in scope, all building to Beijing.

"I always believed my competition was out of the country," Warren said. "That's why I never boxed in the Golden Gloves or the PAL. I just fought in the U.S. Championships, so I could

keep my ranking. I never really even looked at other American fighters. I didn't consider them my competition."

While Warren and 18-year-old light flyweight Luis Yanez of Duncanville, Texas, attempt to win the first U.S. gold medals in either of the two lightest weights since Paul Gonzales and Steve McCrory swept both in 1984, their teammates at the top of the scale will have greater difficulty making inroads.

The U.S. did not have a qualifying light heavyweight or super heavyweight and will go to Beijing two boxers shy of a full contingent, same as in Athens. Russia is the only team with a full 11-man roster. Cuba, China, Kazakhstan, and Morocco all have 10.

The demise of big-bodied American boxers is well documented, though the inability to qualify a super heavyweight for the Olympics is a particularly telling development, given the country's erstwhile dominance in the unlimited division. As if to illustrate the passing of the American big man, the only medal won by a U.S. heavyweight or super heavyweight during the past four Olympiads is buried in a Chicago cemetery.

Nate Jones won the heavyweight bronze meal at the 1996 Games and later placed the award in the coffin of his twin sister, Natalie. "When I was coming up, there were still plenty of good amateur heavyweights in the U.S.," said Jones. "But football and basketball just blew up. You can make so much money in football and basketball, it's ridiculous, and you don't have to be the best in the world to make it, like you do in boxing. If you're a big man now, and you see the money you can make in other sports, or the possibility of a college scholarship, why put up with all the politics of amateur boxing?"

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Bantamweight Gary Russell Jr. had to make the U.S. the hard way, battling back from an open-round defeat at the Olympic Trials. Russell comes with international experience, finishing just out of the medal run at the '05 and '07 world championships.

The answer rests with those innocent faces in Beijing, including no U.S. boxer older than 23, and four teenagers.

Besides Warren, 20-year-old welterweight Demetrius Andrade, of

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Raynell Williams, a 19-year-old featherweight from Cleveland, skirted some close decisions to qualify for Beijing. Williams reached the world championships last year, losing in the featherweight finals.

Providence, Rhode Island, is a leading medal contender. Andrade was a two-time winner of both the U.S. Championships and National Golden Gloves, and might have won a third U.S. title if not for an injury in last year's tournament. After losing the 2007 Pan American Games final in Rio de Janeiro, to home favorite Pedro Lima of Brazil—who did not qualify for Beijing—Andrade joined Warren in winning the World Amateur Championships.

It wasn't such a star-studded road for all American Olympians, however.

Gary Russell Jr., 20, of Washington, D.C., lost his first bout at the Olympic Trials and had to survive the challengers' bracket and win six consecutive bouts to earn the bantamweight spot. Russell finished just shy of medals in the 2005 and 2007 World Championships.

Raynell Williams, 19, of Cleveland, Ohio had to win two of three extremely close decisions–none decided by more than four points—to outlast Houston's Hylon Williams Jr. in the U.S. featherweight trials. Williams won three bouts before losing at last year's World Championships.

Javier Molina, 18, of Commerce, California, is the youngest member of the team, and one of three who fought successfully through the first Americas Qualifier to earn his light welterweight spot.

Even the team members who had the most difficult time qualifying have their supporters.

Deontay Wilder, 23, hopes to break the U.S. dry spell at heavyweight. After his three-year-old daughter, Naieya, was born with spina bifida, Wilder dropped out of Shelton State Community College in his native Tuscaloosa, Alabama, started working two jobs in a restaurant and a beer distributorship, and soon found a new love. He started boxing in October 2005, and 34 months later will participate in the Olympic Games.

"He's the outsider because the international community doesn't know him," Campbell said, "but he has a chance because he's such a hard puncher. You should hear how the kids who have sparred with Deontay talk about his punching power. He's a longshot, but he's a legitimate longshot."

Shawn Estrada is Mitchell's longshot. The 23-year-old East Los Angeles middleweight is the senior

member of the U.S. team, and the only one who successfully fought through both Americas Qualifiers, in Trinidad and Tobago and Guatemala. The Olympic Trials marked Estrada's only major national championship as a senior boxer.

"He's mentally tough and he's rugged, just like the Germans and Russians are," Mitchell said. "If you give him an elbow, he'll give you an elbow back. When I was coaching the national team, I always wanted guys who had the style that was fit for international competition, the style that could win fights. This is the one style that fits."

Lightweight Sadam Ali, 19, of Brooklyn, New York is the first Arab-American boxer to represent the U.S. in the Olympics, and says "Prince" Naseem Hamed was his biggest influence. When he won the National Golden Gloves in 2006, he was announced as "Ali Sadam" throughout the tournament, and never corrected anyone.

When he received his championship ring, and found all other winners had their last names engraved, he asked why "Sadam" was emblazoned on his. Organizers discovered that Ali had listed his surname first on his entry application, and they thought it was his given name. A reworked ring was forwarded to Ali. Golden Gloves of America Executive Director Jim Beasley still wears the bobbled bauble.

While not everyone agrees with the year-long training format, Campbell said having the athletes in Colorado Springs proved instrumental when the team encountered a series of physical setbacks. The injured body parts of choice were shoulders (Andrade and Russell) and torn meniscus cartilage (Williams and Warren, with the latter undergoing arthroscopic surgery).

"That's why we want them together," Campbell said. "We want to look for these things. There are certain things we don't allow when they're in Colorado Springs that they do when they're on break at home. That's where the problems come. When some of

THE ONES TO WATCH

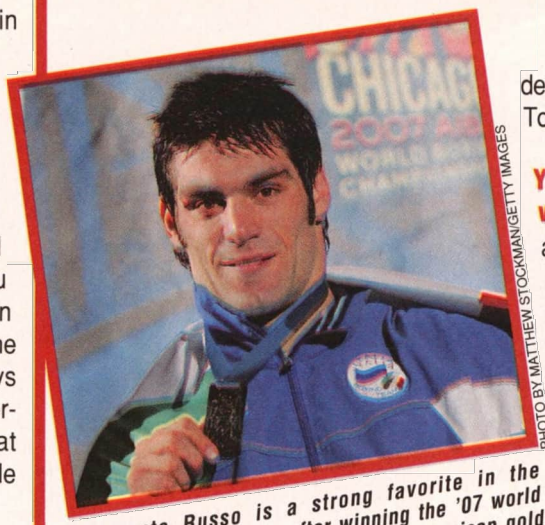


PHOTO BY MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Clemente Russo is a strong favorite in the heavyweight division, after winning the '07 world championships. Russo lost to lone American gold medalist Andre Ward at the '04 Games at light heavyweight.

Zou Shiming, China, light flyweight: The 27-year-old took bronze at the 2004 Olympics, which he started with a victory over Rau'shee Warren in a first-round bout. Zou won World Championships in both 2005 and 2007, scoring a decision in last year's final over his principal rival, 2004 Olympian Harry Tanamor of the Philippines. Zou boxes in the lightest weight class, but may be the heaviest favorite in Beijing.

Somjit Jongjohor, Thailand, flyweight: In his final Olympics, Jongjohor, 33, tries to add a gold medal to a resume that includes a 2003 world title. He lost a close computer decision to Warren in last year's world final, in which he knocked out two of the American's teeth with a headbutt. Jongjohor lost to eventual gold medalist Yuriokis Gamboa of Cuba in a second-round bout at the 2004 Olympics.

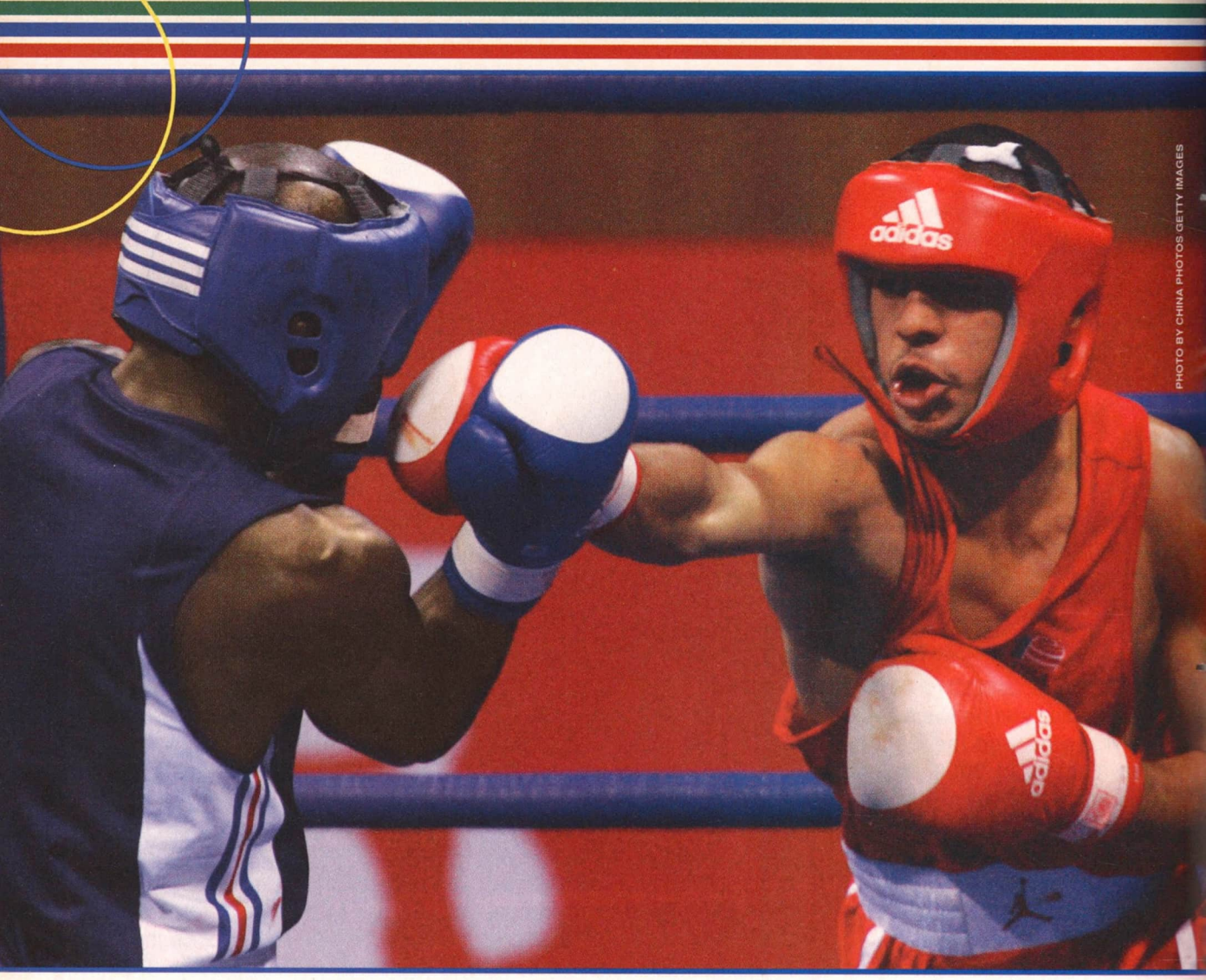
Albert Selimov, Russia, featherweight: One of three Russians who took advantage of the Cuban boycott to win last year's World Championships, the 22-year-old Selimov is one of several boxers from his country facing potential regional showdowns against residents of former Soviet republics—in his case, Ukraine's Vasyl Lomachenko, whom he defeated in the world final. Cuba's Idel Torriente also will challenge.

Yordenis Ugas, Cuba, lightweight: Won the 2005 world title at age 19, and the 2007 Pan American Games. Now 22, Ugas is favored to continue the dominance that Cuba's Mario Kindelan demonstrated in winning the last two lightweight gold medals. Frankie Gavin, England's first world amateur champion, looms as a major threat, as does 2004 featherweight gold medalist Aleksei Tishchenko of Russia.

Emilio Correa Jr., Cuba, middleweight: His father was a pioneer, winning one of Cuba's first three boxing gold medals, as a welterweight, in 1972 (along with heavyweight Teofilo Stevenson and bantamweight Orlando Martinez). At 22, Correa should be better prepared for a potential showdown with Russia's Matvey Korobov than when he lost that same matchup in the 2005 world final.

Clemente Russo, Italy, heavyweight: The two heaviest weight divisions could feature Italy vs. Russia showdowns for supremacy, including Russo vs. Rakhim Chakhkeiv, a bout Russo won 7-6 in last year's World Championships. Russo, a policeman, lost to Andre Ward in the 2004 Olympics at light heavyweight. Of the four Italian Olympic boxers, three, including Russo, live in or around Marcianise (pop. 40,000).

Islam Timurziev, Russia, super heavyweight: The idea of the heavy-handed Timurziev, 25, often proves more threatening than the reality. He missed time with an ailment alternately reported as cancer or a non-cancerous tumor in 2006, and withdrew from last year's World Championships with appendicitis, before a semifinal against winner Roberto Cammarelle of Italy. If healthy, he is a medal favorite.



Lightweight Sadam Ali, the first Arab-American on U.S. boxing team, is hoping to make a name for himself at the 2008 games. The 19-year old from Brooklyn, New York had the misfortune of having his name reversed during the '06 National Golden Gloves.

them came back, they had problems, but we had medical staff right on premises, and they were able to do the surgery and therapy. Now, everybody is back and ready to compete."

Successful Olympians, besides talent, usually possess a single-mindedness to the exclusion of the broader Olympic experience. In '04, after each victory, Andre Ward eschewed the Olympic Village, choosing to return to the technical adviser's condominium to study videotape of his next opponent instead.

Ward's diligence was rewarded with the first U.S. gold medal since David Reid's punch for the ages in 1996. Those two, along with Oscar De La Hoya in 1992, are the nation's only gold medalists from the last four Olympiads.

Mitchell coached two of those three intimately. He was Reid's primary amateur and pro trainer, and was the 2004 technical adviser whose room Ward visited after each victory in Athens. He also has felt the sting of criticism—Floyd Mayweather, Eric Morel, Antonio Tarver, Fernando Vargas, and David Diaz all claimed pro world titles after managing just two bronzes between them when Mitchell was head coach in 1996—and understands the unique challenge ahead.

"There are plenty of opportunities to win a world championship in the pros," Mitchell said. "There's plenty of time. But that Olympic gold medal, that's the hardest thing in the world. It's the peer pressure, the opposition, the country you're in—especially if you're an American—and on top of all that, you're representing your country. It's a hard rock."

The ultimate self-examination will play out August 9-24, and while its two-decade malaise has downgraded U.S. Olympic boxing, American viewers would click their way to MSNBC if their boxers just give them a reason.

The team's diminutive star said he expects to give them one.

"We've stayed together for a whole year, everything discipline and hard training, for one goal," Warren said. "Leaving your family is the hardest thing. But you have to keep your eye on the big prize at the end, and we've done that.

"I'm ready. I've been through this before. It's just all about timing. I've trained hard every day. If the Olympics were tomorrow, I'd be ready." ■

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

The RING

Grades Boxing's Elite

By Don Stradley

Every year, baseball fans are asked to vote for the MLB All-Star teams. Inevitably, players who may be having great seasons are often overlooked in favor of players who are simply more popular. This always gets the purists complaining. But in a way, that's how it should be if an All-Star team reflects what the baseball audience wants to see.

Our boxing All-Star Report Cards faces a similar dilemma. There will be some readers who want to know why Roy Jones is back on the list, while Steve Cunningham or Fernando Montiel are nowhere in sight. All we can say is, Steve and Fernando are like those players on the small market teams. And as they say in baseball: Better luck next year.

These 20 fighters are not the best pound-for-pound, although some of them belong on that list too. They are not all champions as recognized by THE RING, but they may have an alphabet belt or may have been a RING champion in the past. Some of them are Hall of Fame bound, while it's too soon to make such a statement on others.

What they have in common is that they sell tickets. Boxing would suffer without them.

Regarding Floyd Mayweather's retirement, we've kept him on our list because of the outstanding year he had. Besides, everyone knows that early retirements rarely stick.

Also, it's important to remember that in categories such as "Talent," we are evaluating the fighter's talent at this point in his career. Therefore, certain fighters, Roy Jones and Shane Mosley, for example, would have scored higher earlier in their careers.

Some of last year's stars are gone from the list. Here's what we wrote about them in 2007:

•Ruslan Chagaev: Although popular overseas, we pointed out that "he is largely an unknown quantity in the United States." And he still is, no matter how many times he fights Nicolay Valuev.

•Bernard Hopkins: We noticed "slippage," but still viewed him as "one of the best in the world." Then he lost to Joe Calzaghe, mainly because he looked every day of his 43 years the last three rounds.

•Mikkel Kessler: " … deserves credit for his willingness to accept tough challenges and to travel to meet them," we said. Then he traveled to the U.K. and was schooled by Calzaghe.

•Jermain Taylor: On his bouts with Hopkins and Winky Wright, we wrote, "you'd have to say it is not clear he genuinely beat either of these old men." He also had major trouble with Kelly Pavlik, a young man, losing twice.

•Juan Diaz: "Now that he has beaten Freitas, he has become one of the major stars in Don King's empire." That is until an ugly dispute between King and Diaz' trainer, Willie Savannah, followed by Diaz losing to Nate Campbell.

•Edwin Valero: Good things were coming if, "he gets a license to box in the U.S.," if he could "secure some big name opposition," and "keep his chin down." He kept his chin down, obtained a license to box in Texas, but still hasn't fought any big names.

•Rafael Marquez: "A return with Vazquez could take Marquez even further, provided he wins again." He had two returns with Vazquez, lost both.

Now, it's time for the 2008 All-Star Report Cards. The fighters are judged on talent, achievement, marketability, support system, and growth potential. They are presented in order of weight class, starting with the heavyweights. The grades are based on results prior to June 9.

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Wladimir Klitschko

50-3 (44)

IBF Heavyweight Titleholder

TALENT: He has the physical tools to be a force, including height, power, and athletic ability, but he also suffers from an overcautious nature. His timid lapses are understandable, since he has suffered a pair of violent knockout losses and a terrible headbutt cut. These worries about his chin, stamina, and skin have turned him into a less than aggressive fighter. Still, when he's feeling dominant, he can be amazing to watch. His left jab is a perfect blinder that sets up a fast right hand, and his left hook nearly decapitated Sam Peter. He has a solid understanding of the basics of boxing, is light on his feet, and has grown more efficient under Emanuel Steward's watch. Not many fighters can stand up to Klitschko when he decides to end a fight. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: Against Sultan Ibragimov last January he committed the one unacceptable sin in boxing—he was dull. Granted, he won nearly every round of their bout, but his less than dynamic performance undid some of the progress he'd made since pairing up with Steward. Still, along with a gold medal at the Olympics and a number of alphabet belts, Klitschko has cleaned out the division. Calvin Brock, Jameel McCline, and Monte Barrett were all good prospects before they fought Klitschko, and now they're journeymen. ***Grade: B+***

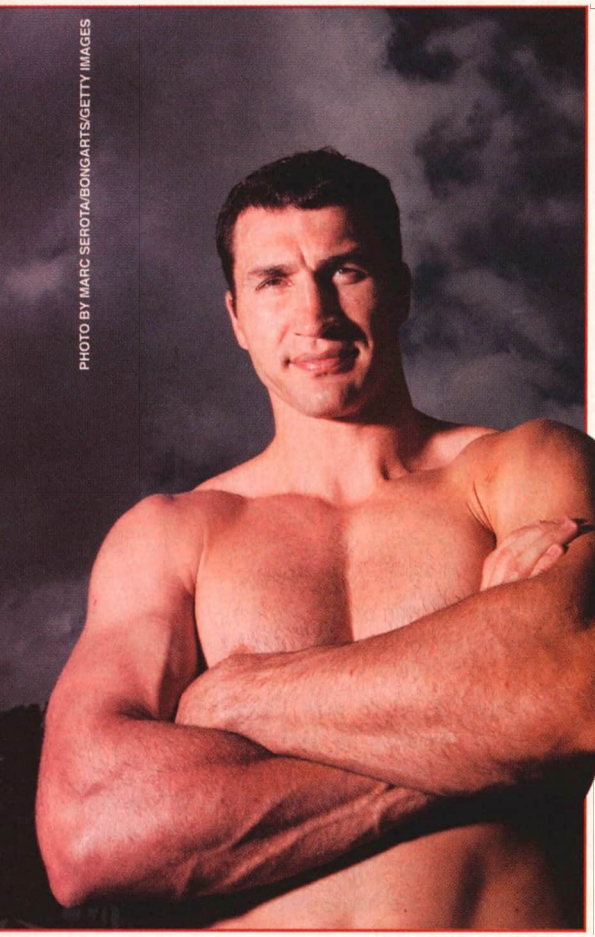


PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: Wladimir and his brother, Vitali, are among the most popular athletes in Europe. Their official website is translated into four languages, they have political aspirations, and belong to many altruistic organizations. They also have a touch of showbiz about them. They have started their own management company, and they even have a line of men's wear. America may be cool toward him, but Wladimir will be visible for many years in Germany and Ukraine, either as a promoter, spokesperson, or entrepreneur. ***Grade: A***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Steward has been in Klitschko's corner since 2004, but it has to be a frustrating experience. Steward has to constantly plead with him to throw right hands or become more aggressive. Still, their pairing has to be considered a success. After two knockout losses, Klitschko seemed ready for the scrap heap, but thanks largely to Steward, he has managed to come back and dominate the division. German trainer Fritz Sdunek is also still with Klitschko. Shelley Finkel handles Klitschko's American business. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He is stuck making mandatory defenses of belts we don't care about against fighters we don't care about. A rematch with Sam Peter seems the logical course, and, if the ratings stay as they currently are, would crown a heavyweight champion recognized by THE RING. However, brother Vitali wants to cut in line and grab Peter for himself. If it comes off as scheduled, Wladimir will have fought Tony Thompson in Hamburg by the time you read this. If he's been victorious, and he and Vitali continue to take advantage of the endless paper titles available, they're denying boxing fans of one true champion at heavyweight. But if Peter beats Vitali, there could be a big bout with Wlad in the future. If not, Wlad remains mired in Alphabet City. ***Grade: B***

Samuel Peter

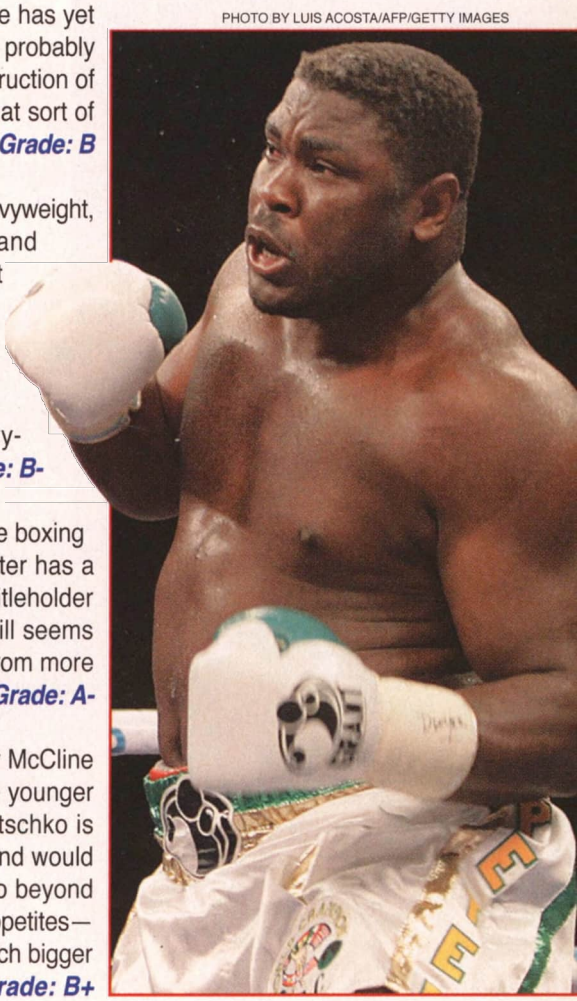
30-1 (23)

WBC Heavyweight Titleholder

TALENT: Peter's clubbing punches were enough to get him into the elite level of the current heavyweight division, but he has since complimented his caveman arsenal by adding a good jab and learning to pace himself. At times, he still seems flaky and unpredictable, and seems to lose his cool during fights and resort to dirty tactics. Against Jameel McCline, he was dropped three times, but he showed some heart by lasting the distance and squeaking by on points. Against 39-year-old Oleg Maskaev, Peter was back to his old form. In fact, he showed some wisdom and maturity by taking his time and dismantling Maskaev over a few rounds, rather than trying to bash him to pieces as soon as he had him hurt. ***Grade: B***

ACHIEVEMENT: He has won an alphabet strap not belonging to Wladimir Klitschko, which has made him a big star back home in Nigeria. But more significant than the WBC belt were his two wins over James Toney. Beating Toney showed that Peter is a fighter of some dimension, and not just a brute. As an amateur he represented Nigeria in the 2000 Olympics, but won no medals. He made his pro debut in Kazakhstan on the undercard of a Vassiliy Jirov main event. He has yet to headline a major show in his adopted hometown of Las Vegas, but that is probably on the horizon. His most important bout may have been his one-punch destruction of Jeremy Williams in 2004, because we keep tuning in to see if he can do that sort of thing again. ***Grade: B***

PHOTO BY LUIS ACOSTA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



MARKETABILITY: There is always a market for a hard-punching heavyweight, but Peter might not get as far as some. He has a thick, difficult accent and sometimes seems on the edge of religious zealotry. He may be the first heavyweight titlist to start speaking in tongues during an HBO interview. He's already accused American judges of being against him because he's black. Also, a squabble with his wife last December escalated until his brother-in-law aimed a shotgun at Peter's head to calm him down. At best, it was an isolated incident. At worst, we have another nutty heavyweight on our hands. ***Grade: B-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Promoted by Duva Boxing, trained by longtime boxing coach Pops Anderson, and managed by the bodacious Ivaylo Gotzev, Peter has a strong and loyal team around him. Former junior welterweight lightweight titleholder Cornelius Boza Edwards has joined Anderson in Peter's training. Peter still seems enthusiastic about boxing, so their biggest challenge may be to keep him from more domestic troubles. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Peter's stock dropped when the ordinary McCline pushed him to the limit, but he's still on the rise. At age 27, he's one of the younger heavyweight contenders fighting today. His upcoming bout with Vitali Klitschko is pivotal for his career. A win would set up an intriguing bout with Wladimir and would most likely crown an undisputed champion. There's not much for him to do beyond that—Peter versus a string of Eastern European dullards doesn't whet our appetites—but resounding victories over the Klitschko brothers would make Peter a much bigger star than he is now. ***Grade: B+***

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

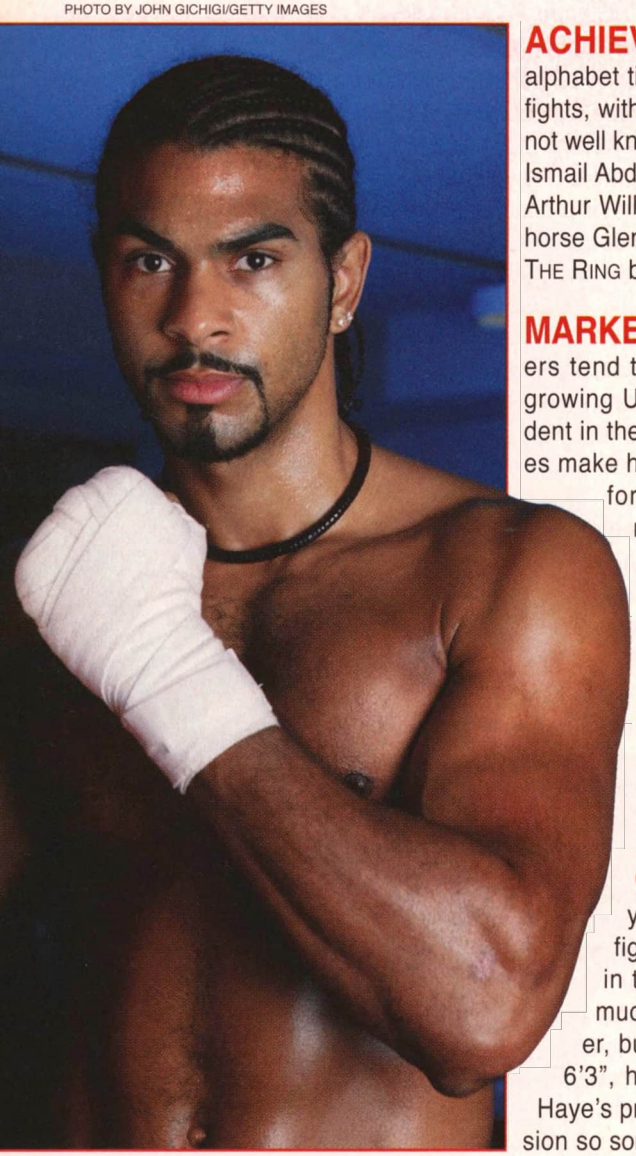
David Haye

21-1 (20)

Heavyweight

TALENT: Haye is an aggressive puncher who can really light up a crowd. He didn't get his "Hayemaker" nickname by accident. His last bout, a second-round destruction of Enzo Maccarinelli, was a perfect display of Haye's talent. The key to his success is a blazing right hand and a ton of attitude. He was kayoed by Carl Thompson in 2004 and has been decked a few times along the way, but that's part of the fun. Against Thompson, Haye appeared to punch himself into exhaustion during the first few rounds, and Thompson kept blasting away to score a fifth-round TKO. Since then, Haye's all-out style has not failed him. ***Grade: A-***

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES



ACHIEVEMENT: He's done all he can at cruiserweight, winning three alphabet titles and THE RING's championship honors. Twenty knockouts in 22 fights, with only one loss, is impressive. Although most of his opponents were not well known, they were experienced fighters, including Giacobbe Fragomeni, Ismail Abdoul, and Alexander Gurov. In 2002, he wiped out former titlist "King" Arthur Williams, and in 2005 Haye needed only two rounds to dispose of warhorse Glenn Kelly. Traveling to France to beat rugged Jean Marc Mormeck for THE RING belt showed that Haye is daring as well as talented. ***Grade: B+***

MARKETABILITY: He's a loud mouth, and that might help. Brash fighters tend to get their way. At 28, he's young and could expand upon the growing UK audience he has already developed, especially if he makes a dent in the heavyweight division. His style and his willingness to take chances make him a great bet for the future. He's also done some modeling work for Abercrombie & Fitch. Whether he becomes a star in America remains to be seen, but Golden Boy Promotions will make sure he has the opportunity. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Haye has an excellent relationship with longtime manager/trainer Adam Booth. In January 2006, Haye signed a three-year contract with Frank Maloney, the former promoter of Lennox Lewis. He recently signed with Golden Boy Promotions, which means GBP sees him in the same vein as a Ricky Hatton. GBP doesn't put out the red carpet for just anybody. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He made his heavyweight debut last year against Tomasz Bonin, a soft-hitting, pudgy Pole who was still fighting six-rounders at age 34. Haye, weighing 217, blew him away in the first round. It was not a performance by which we can judge much. Can Haye handle the bigger fellows? Mormeck was a big cruiser, but he's not Sam Peter. And while Haye was a tall cruiserweight at 6'3", he'll be a modest-sized heavyweight. Still, if his chin holds up, Haye's presence in the heavyweight division may provide the spark the division so sorely needs. ***Grade: A-***

Antonio Tarver

27-4 (19)

IBF Light Heavyweight Titleholder

TALENT: A creative southpaw with a superb sense of ring generalship, Tarver is at his best when he can control a fight from the outside. He can also hit hard with his left, and has scored a few spectacular kayos in his career. When he's on, there are few better. Unfortunately, he's not always on. There have been times when Tarver has been outworked and he has shown a tendency to follow a good performance with a weak one. At 39, he's a relatively fresh veteran, with plenty of experience but not much wear on his body. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: Tarver had a tremendous amateur career, earning a bronze medal in the 1996 Olympics. He had a solid pro career, but was under the radar until his series with Jones. He lost a narrow decision in their first bout, and crushed Jones in the return to win the world light heavyweight championship. Since then he has been up and down, splitting a pair of bouts with Glen Johnson, beating Jones in their rubber match, and then losing to Bernard Hopkins in a lackluster performance. Since the Hopkins loss, Tarver has rebounded with wins over Elvir Muriqi, Danny Santiago, and Clinton Woods. Beating Woods earned Tarver the IBF strap and put him back in the big fight picture. ***Grade: A-***

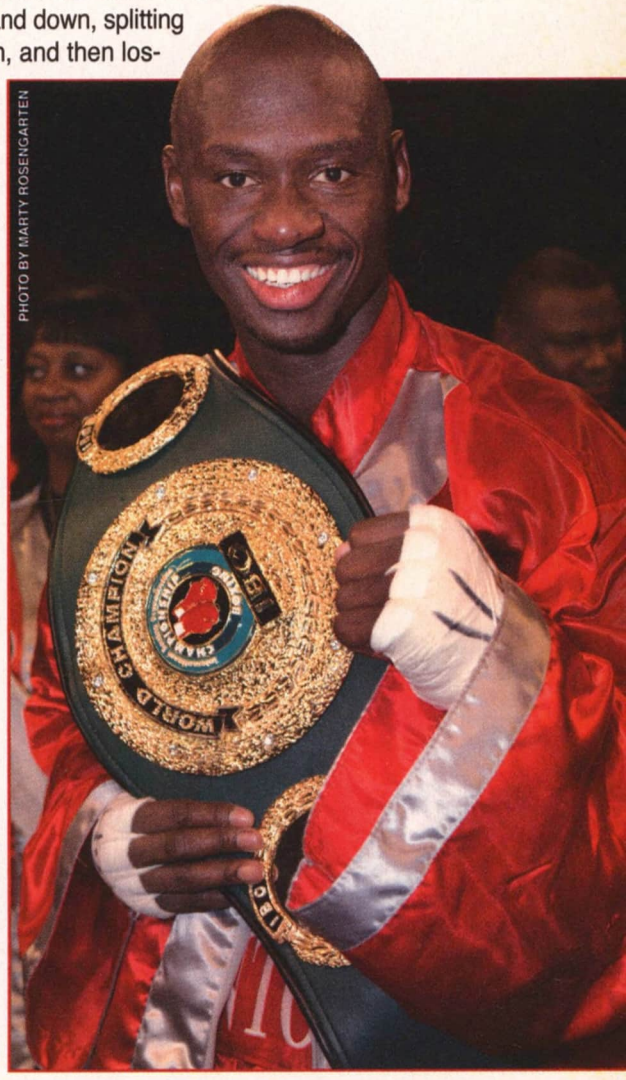


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

MARKETABILITY: Whether he's using his own lines ("Any excuses tonight, Roy?") or ripping off old lines from Muhammad Ali ("I'm still pretty as a girl!"), Tarver is one of the most garrulous fighters around. He did the best he could with a role in *Rocky Balboa* and is always an entertaining studio guest on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. He's not so charming, however, when claiming he was poisoned prior to the Hopkins loss. Even so, there's a great job for him somewhere, possibly behind a microphone. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Star Boxing guided much of Tarver's career, but Joe DeGuardia's promotional outfit is no longer his exclusive promoter. Gary Shaw has been the lead promoter for two of Tarver's last three fights. Buddy McGirt has trained him for several years, but somebody should've told Tarver to be careful about gaining so much weight for the Rocky movie, and then shedding it for the Hopkins fight. Some think that Tarver's lethargy that night was brought on by the weight loss. But Hopkins also had a lot to do with it. Still, if he doesn't wait too long, Tarver has a decent shot at recapturing his place at the top of the light heavyweight division. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Tarver has plenty of attractive opportunities at 175, the most obvious one being Joe Calzaghe. Some of Tarver's old opponents, Jones and Johnson in particular, would welcome a piece of him. Meanwhile, Tarver would probably welcome another chance at Hopkins. "The Magic Man" has also called out WBC titlist Chad Dawson. Time is running out, though. ***Grade: B***

Roy Jones splits Felix Trinidad's guard with a left en route to a 12-round unanimous decision on January 19, 2008, at Madison Square Garden.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

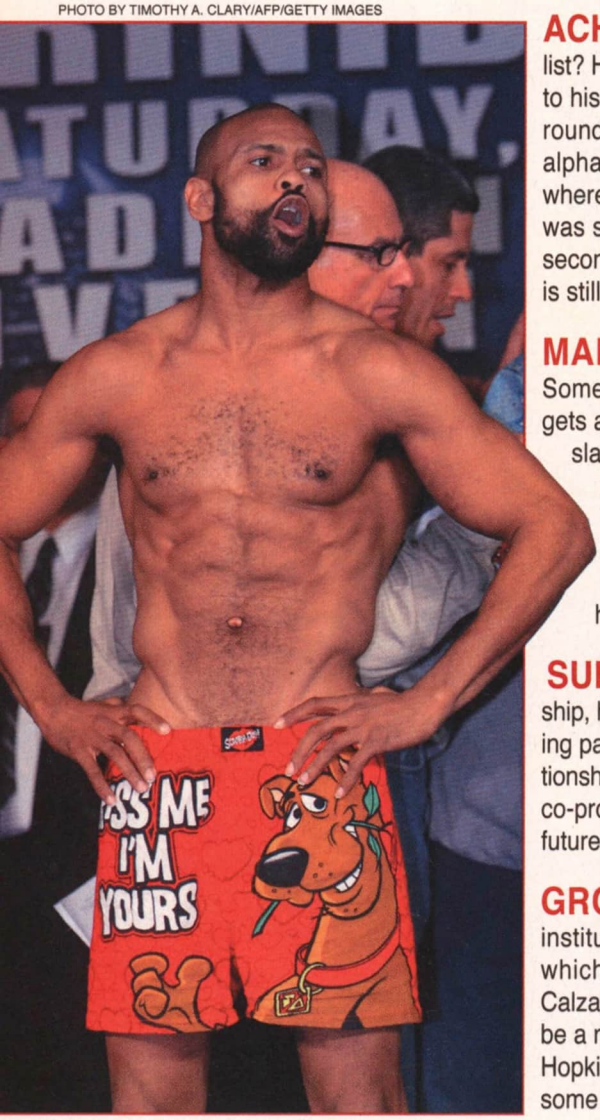
Roy Jones

52-4 (38)

Light Heavyweight

TALENT: The fighter we once called Superman is no longer faster than a speeding bullet, but was certainly faster than Felix Trinidad last January in New York. When Jones went through a three-fight losing streak in 2004-05, much was said about how his unorthodox style was now useless since he'd lost some of his vaunted speed. But the truth is that Jones still possesses a sharp fighting mind and has forgotten more about boxing than most of us ever knew. At 39, he's surviving on guile, some rope-a-dope, a right lead that still cracks like a whip, and some very basic stuff such as bodypunching and stealing rounds with late flurries. ***Grade: B+***

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ACHIEVEMENT: Who even thought Jones would be back on the All-Star list? Had he retired in 2005, he'd already done enough. From his debut in 1989 to his win over heavyweight titlist John Ruiz in 2003, Jones hardly ever lost a round. Along the way he conquered three weight divisions, winning enough alphabet belts to fill his own wing at the International Boxing Hall of Fame, where he's a first ballot shoe-in five years after he retires. In his prime, Jones was so good he got bored, and then he became boring. But now he's on the second leg of his career, and, like the all-time greats, he's showing that there is still something left, even as he enters his twilight years. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: Jones was always too strange to be marketed. Sometimes he talks so fast that it sounds like gibberish, and other times he gets a bit pompous and self-loving. Veering from Christian imagery, to hip-hop slang, to cockfight references, his interviews have always been surreal. At times, he's moody, and was often unwilling to talk to the press to promote fights. HBO tried to make him a ringside commentator, but he always looked uncomfortable and his contract was eventually dropped. He's been more relaxed in recent public appearances, and was willing to help promote the bout with Trinidad. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Alton Merkerson is still the commander of the ship, having trained Jones for over a decade. They have one of the longest lasting partnerships in boxing. Jones manages himself. Aside from his stormy relationship with his father, Jones has had a fairly uneventful personal life. Don King co-promoted the Trinidad bout, which means he might have a hand in Jones' future, but Jones couldn't be classified as one of King's fighters. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It's hard to grow when you're already an institution. Jones' PPV bout with Trinidad drew around a half-million buys, which means he can still draw with a good co-star. He could meet Joe Calzaghe sometime soon for the light heavyweight championship, which would be a major coup if he wins. He has dismissed a rematch with old rival Bernard Hopkins in the past, but it's now one of the few options for him that might have some commercial appeal. ***Grade: B***

Joe Calzaghe

45-0 (32)

World Light Heavyweight & Super Middleweight Champion

TALENT: His quick-handed southpaw style has kept him undefeated through 45 bouts. His punching speed is not diminishing even as he turns 37. His fragile hands keep him from landing hard shots, but his ring smarts make up for a lack of power. Against crafty, old Bernard Hopkins, Calzaghe adjusted after a shaky start, landed flurries when he could find openings, and by keeping Hopkins on the move, he gave the appearance that he was forcing the action. It was not effective from the streetfighting perspective, but two of the three ringside judges thought he did enough to edge the fight. Along with his ring savvy is a profound confidence. He has no shortage of guts, either. More than once in his career he's risen from a knockdown to win a fight. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: Like a lot of the stars on our list, he did things his way. He stuck to his UK stomping grounds, gradually (almost too gradually) increasing the quality of competition. He was accused of ducking American fighters, so he whipped Jeff Lacey. He heard the comments that Mikkel Kessler was the next big deal at 168, so he whipped Kessler too. He eventually met everyone's expectations by coming to America to fight Hopkins. His win wasn't the most satisfying or dominant performance of his career, but to beat Hopkins at all is a major achievement, as a couple of future Hall of Famers will tell you. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: He's a handsome, talkative fellow who can fit into almost any situation, whether as a commentator or a possible endorser. He's led a clean life, free of ugly headlines, and is well loved in Wales. But does he even want to be marketed? He's such a low-key fellow that he's likely to stay in his village and not bother with the big, bad commercial world. And casual American fans watching him for the first time against Hopkins were probably not too impressed with his style. But it's tough to argue with the combined total of more than 80,000 fans that turned out for his two most recent fights in Wales. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He's trained by his father, Enzo, a former musician who has evolved into a smart boxing man. This is one father and son combo that doesn't create controversy. Veteran British promoter Frank Warren has handled Calzaghe's fights since 1996, and has had the last laugh many times over with Calzaghe proving himself a winner. A stadium full of loyal Welsh fans does the rest. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: With the scent of freshly minted American dollar bills wafting past his aquiline nose, Calzaghe will probably hang around for a few more fights. He has mentioned Roy Jones as an opponent, and he would need a very convincing win over the aging Jones to make up for the nip-and-tuck snoozer with Hopkins. Middleweight boss Kelly Pavlik would also be an intriguing opponent. But at Calzaghe's age, a backlist of injuries, and everything he's already accomplished, there's not much space for the Welshman to grow. Moreover, Joe's girlfriend and the UK press are already pushing him to retire this year. ***Grade: B***

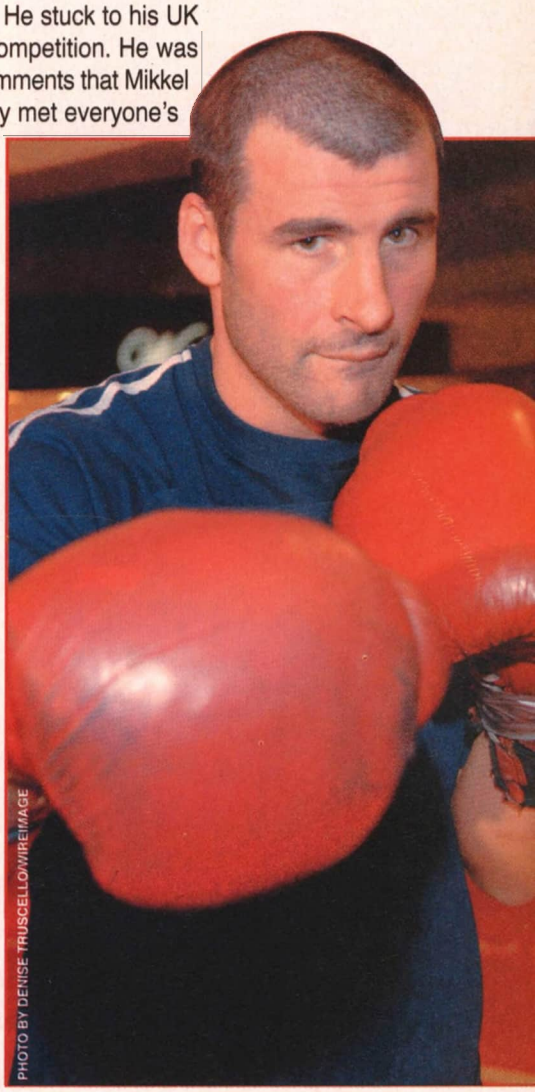


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGE

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Lucian Bute

22-0 (18)

IBF Super Middleweight Titleholder

TALENT: A Romanian southpaw fighting out of Canada, Bute has become one of the surprise stars of boxing north of the border. He's a rangy super middleweight, standing 6'2", but he's as solid as a tank. He's a good, if not devastating puncher, having scored 18 knockouts in his 22 pro fights, usually achieved by throwing a stiff left cross right down the pipe. Not timid about mixing it up, and has fought through cuts and been staggered. He can be awkward, using odd angles to frustrate opponents, and is a good counterpuncher. ***Grade: B+***

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

ACHIEVEMENT: Bute was a highly decorated amateur fighter, winning the bronze medal at the 1999 World Championships, a gold at the Francophone Games in 2001, and a silver medal at the 2003 Bangkok Games. In his ninth pro fight, he stopped veteran Dingaan Thobela. During 2005 he beat Donny McCrary (KO 4), Kabary Salem (KO 8), and Donnell Wiggins (KO 2). In 2007, Bute won a hard-fought decision over *Contender* Season 3 winner Sakio Bika. Many think Bute handled Bika in a much easier manner than did Joe Calzaghe. Bute is enormously popular at the Bell Centre in Montreal, having fought there regularly since his career began. He drew 13,244 fans to the Centre when he defeated Alejandro Berrio for the IBF super middleweight title. The attendance increased to nearly 14,000 when he made his first defense against faded William Joppy in February 2008. Bute dominated Joppy, dropping him three times before the fight was stopped in the 10th. ***Grade: B***

MARKETABILITY: At 28, with his popularity in Quebec surging, this is the right time for Bute to make a splash. He has already been on ESPN2, but now he has to find his way onto HBO or Showtime, perhaps on a pay-per-view undercard. He's bound to go farther than Montreal's last boxing hero, Eric Lucas. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Bute's career has been quietly guided by manager Chris Ganutescu. Trainer Stéphan Larouche, who also was behind developing both Eric Lucas and Leonard Dorin, has helped calm Bute down some, turning him from a wild-punching amateur into a smart counterpuncher. Larouche was also instrumental in selecting his opponents, choosing fighters of different styles to give Bute the right education. He's at the end of a two-year contract with Canadian promotional group Interbox, but will probably sign up again since they've handled him well from the beginning and consider him the anchor of their stable. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: With Calzaghe probably out of the 168-pound class in the near future, Bute could be the heir apparent. With Kessler on the comeback trail after losing to Calzaghe last year, a Bute-Kessler bout could be one of the more interesting fights in the super middleweight division. In the meantime, a Bute-Librador Andrade bout could be a tasty way for USA fans to become acquainted with Bute. ***Grade: B+***

Kelly Pavlik

34-0 (30)

World Middleweight Champion

TALENT: Big boned and rustbelt tough, Pavlik has an indomitable fighting spirit. Since making last year's list, Pavlik has notched two wins over Jermain Taylor (the first of which was a stirring come-from-behind knockout that came very close to scooping Fight of the Year honors), and a three-round dismantling of Gary Lockett. His boxing skills have gradually improved—he has a steady, come forward style highlighted by a good jab and a nice body attack—but the foundation of his success is a drop-dead right hand. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: At 26, he's rapidly becoming one of the must-see fighters of this era. Defeating Edison Miranda and then Taylor (twice) put him squarely atop the middleweight division (and knocked Taylor from our All-Star list). The relative proximity of Pavlik's Youngstown, Ohio, hometown to Atlantic City has helped the old fight town regain some of its old glory after the retirement of Arturo Gatti, and Pavlik has given HBO a timely jolt of adrenaline. But most importantly, his work ethic and sense of determination makes every out-of-work steelworker in his hometown feel proud on fight night. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: A hard-punching Caucasian kid is quite marketable, especially a likeable one such as Pavlik. HBO has happily jumped on the bandwagon, portraying Pavlik as a humble slugger with an entire town riding on his achievements. As long as opponents continue to crumble under his blows, Pavlik is on his way to a comfortable future. If he was British, he'd be bigger than Ricky Hatton, but he's from Ohio, so he'll have to settle for less fanfare. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Pavlik has a deep connection to longtime trainer Jack Loew, who has done a great job with him. Promoter Bob Arum knows he has a goldmine in Pavlik and has seen his gambles pay off (putting him in with Miranda was a gamble), but too many Lockett-type foes might have us revising Arum's sagacity. Cameron Dunkin, 2007's Manager of the Year, manages Pavlik. The team is sound, with Pavlik's father, Michael, on-hand as an advisor, but no-frills Pavlik makes it easy for them. ***Grade A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: The winner of Edison Miranda-Arthur Abraham II would be a good opponent for Pavlik at 160, but after that his best bets are actually at 168. Standing 6'2½" and possessing the reach of a California Condor, Pavlik can carry the extra pounds, as he showed in the second Taylor fight, which was made at super middleweight. Mikkel Kessler is a possibility for Pavlik, and Sakio Bika would be a great challenge as well at 168. Pavlik is still young, and could possibly finish his career at light heavyweight, although there was a rumbling at press time that Joe Calzaghe might be in his more immediate future. ***Grade: A***

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Oscar De La Hoya

39-5 (30)

Junior Middleweight

TALENT: De La Hoya showed us a few things against Steve Forbes. Not only can he win virtually every round against one of the *Contender* finalists, but at 35, he can still do a fair imitation of the "Golden Boy." He addressed his long-standing problem with endurance in a recent RING magazine story when he said it was all mental. Maybe it is. Fighting Forbes at junior middleweight left him a little gaunt, but he was still throwing good punches in the late rounds. No longer having the advantages of youth and former speed, he is still a sound fighter with a good offense who, although not brilliant, is capable of spectacular moments. He has suffered through the hand problems that all fighters deal with, but hasn't been too bothered by cuts. He has a sound chin. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: Other than facing the best fighters of his era, his greatest achievement may be that he's been at the top for 15 years and we've yet to grow tired of him. He's overcome scandals, the indifference of a Mexican audience, and accusations that he would rather be a businessman than a fighter. He drifted too far beyond his best weight for a near-disaster against Felix Sturm and an embarrassing kayo loss to Bernard Hopkins. Still, he maintains his position as boxing's top draw. We'll bet this guy wakes up in the morning thinking of ways to prove people wrong. ***Grade: A+***

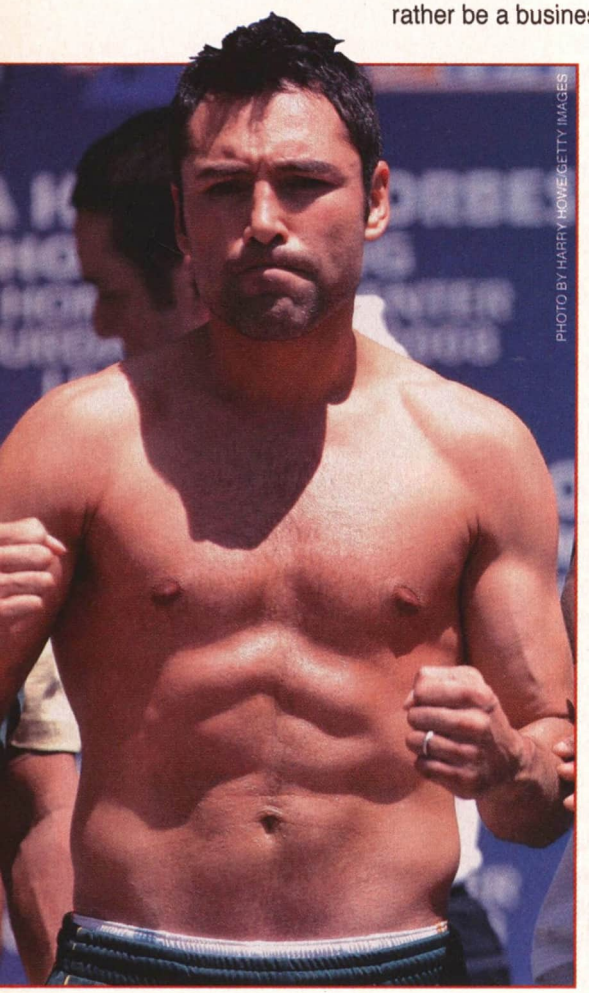


PHOTO BY HARRY HOWE/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: The Forbes bout attracted approximately 27,000, a testament to De La Hoya's enduring popularity. He has always been the safe, smiling alternative to moody stars like Mike Tyson, James Toney, and Roy Jones. Aside from a handful of Internet message-room forum geeks who have hated him since the 1992 Olympics, De La Hoya may go down as the most well-liked man in fight history. ***Grade: A+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He has a loving wife and family, loyal friends from his childhood working at Golden Boy Promotions, and a seemingly perfect partnership in GBP CEO Richard Schaefer. Things are still smooth with business partners Hopkins, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Shane Mosley. As far as we can tell, there are no visible chinks in the armor. Even his offbeat relationship with trainer Roger Mayweather works. Maybe the new age gurus are right—if you smile all the time, good things will come to you. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: How much more can he grow? A rematch with Floyd Mayweather appears to be off, unless "Pretty Boy" changes his mind about retirement. It's unlikely that there's another match out there that would be as big a moneymaker, but there are still plenty of attractive options. From a fan's point of view, a bout with the Miguel Cotto-Antonio Margarito winner would be perfect, but the peace treaty between GBP and Top Rank, which promotes Cotto and Margarito appears to be falling apart, which could make that a difficult match to orchestrate. But regardless of whom he fights, Oscar is on the final lap of his boxing career, and from here on most of his growth will be as a promoter. ***Grade: A***

Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.

36-0-1 (29)

Junior Middleweight

TALENT: He is one of Mexico's most popular fighters right now, and it's not solely because of his famous father. Junior has developed into a solid fighter with a wicked left hook to the body, a patient, stalking style, decent power, and a willingness to punch it out when necessary. At 22, he's still a pup, but he'll be "best in show" soon enough. At 5'11", he's a tall junior middleweight. He's filled out considerably since he was a bony teenager taking his first steps in boxing. ***Grade: B***

ACHIEVEMENT: Foregoing an amateur career, Chavez Jr. has remained undefeated in 36 fights, the only glitch being a draw with Carlos Molina. An immediate rematch with Molina didn't prove much, as Chavez Jr. struggled to a majority decision. Since then, Junior has won 12 in a row; all but one ending inside the distance. He has become a more aggressive fighter in the past year, using a busier work rate to intimidate opponents. He has recently stepped up in competition, beating undefeated prospect Tobia Loriga. Considering the pressures of having a famous dad and the expectations of his Mexican fans, Chavez Jr. has done a remarkable job of remaining levelheaded. ***Grade: B-***

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: More boyish and low-key than his cocky father, Chavez Jr. could be to Mexican boxing what Dale Earnhardt Jr. is to NASCAR. The only drawback is that he's yet to show any real personality. He may not have one, but it won't matter as long he keeps winning fights. Comfortable in his father's shadow, he may not show who he really is for many years. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Trained by Uncle Rodolfo and promoted carefully by Top Rank, he is on the proper track. There's no indication that he's inherited any of his father's partying habits, which is probably a relief for Bob Arum, who believes Chavez Jr. is on his way to becoming a Mexican ATM machine. The only negative to having Top Rank as his promoter is that Arum will probably exploit the family name for more years than boxing fans will happily tolerate. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: There's still a sense that he's a pampered rookie, but Chavez Jr. has potential. All he needs are some serious tests. There was talk at press time that he'd soon be matched with Hector Camacho Jr., which sounds more like an Arum stunt than a genuine attempt to further his career. Prior to that, Arum was hoping to match J.C. Junior with the spent shell of Arturo Gatti. A better opponent might be somebody like Ishe Smith. Before long, Chavez Jr. will be a full-fledged middleweight. It might not be a good idea to have him face his first real test at 160. ***Grade A-***

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Floyd Mayweather

39-0 (25)

Retired

TALENT: He's the slickest fighter around. His defensive genius is frustrating for opponents, and his ring smarts are unparalleled. He also possesses a mental toughness that he doesn't get credit for. There's nothing the press, an opponent, or a packed MGM Grand can do to shake his concentration. As he showed by kayoing Ricky Hatton, he can punch a little too. ***Grade A+***

ACHIEVEMENT: Not only has Mayweather won title belts in five weight divisions and become a major money-maker, he did it with brittle hands, a dysfunctional family, and a fickle boxing audience. That is quite an accomplishment, and a tribute to Mayweather's overwhelming self-belief. He was determined to do things his way, and if it took the fans a few years to catch up, he didn't care. He knew he was special, and, until his recent retirement, sat atop the pound-for-pound list. ***Grade A+***

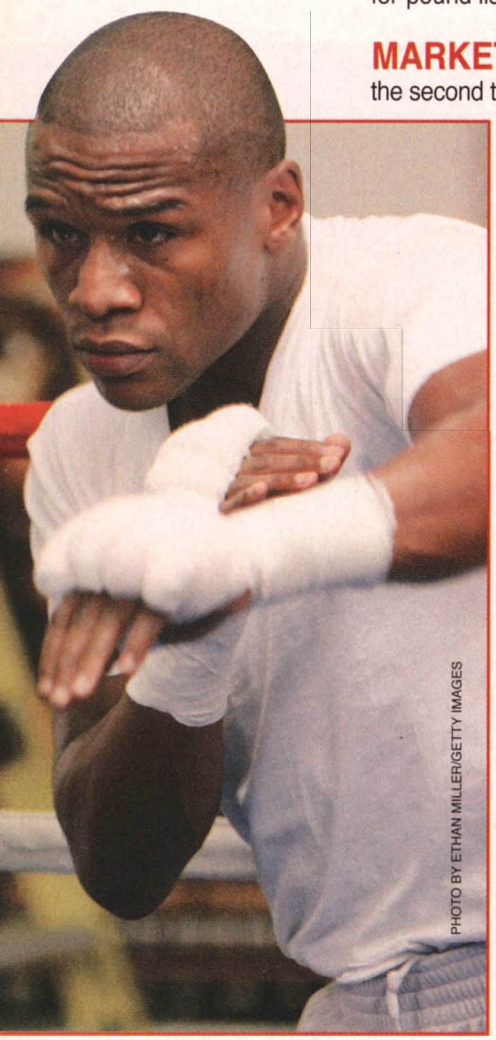


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

MARKETABILITY: A lot of fuss has been made over Mayweather pushing his way into the second tier of mainstream entertainment, appearing on *Dancing With The Stars* and a WWE wrestling events, but let's not get carried away. Those programs weren't exactly begging him to come on, and he was not the first fighter to ever appear on those shows. Dreary profiles in *Sports Illustrated* and *The New York Times* (where he invited a journalist to watch him get a pedicure) didn't make us want to see him either. His bouts with De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton drew major crowds and pay-per-view buys, but he always needed a big-name opponent to draw big numbers. He has willingly exploited his family trouble to help hype his fights, but the Mayweather family has already become tiresome. Short of a personal catastrophe, there's not much more that can be milked out of these people for our entertainment. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: His uncle Roger was in his corner, acting as chief trainer and ultimate cheerleader. From what we can gather, Floyd's home life has settled down in recent years; on HBO's *24/7* he seems downright happy tooling around in his Las Vegas mansion. He admits to having a gambling jones, but just like Charles Barkley, he can afford it. Mayweather manages himself, which is appropriate, with a lot of help from friend and adviser Leonard Ellerbe. He already had a healthy nest egg thanks to Bob Arum landing him a sweet deal with HBO before Mayweather had done anything to earn it. With million of "screw you money," it's easy to steer your own ship. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Should he change his mind about retirement and fight on, there are some good bouts for him, including a De La Hoya rematch, providing Floyd doesn't wait too long. But if the Hatton fight really turns out to be his final contest, Mayweather will soon find out exactly how big of a mainstream following he actually has beyond the boxing crowd. Moreover, if he stays retired, he's walking away from tens of millions of dollars. When is the last time you saw that happen in boxing? Due to his current circumstances, we're giving Floyd two grades in this category. ***Grade: A*** (if he continues to fight); ***Grade B-*** (if he stays retired)

Miguel Cotto

32-0 (26)

WBA Welterweight Titleholder

TALENT: Cotto can do a little bit of everything in a boxing ring. He has stopped opponents with bodyshots, worn them down with his strength, and outboxed them. He's been cut, staggered, and dropped, yet remains undefeated. After some scary moments at junior welterweight that caused us to wonder how durable he was, he's been solid as a bull at 147, walking through the best punches of Zab Judah and Shane Mosley. He's also calm and economical. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: Beating Mosley last year put Cotto into the All-Star category once and for all. He was on last year's list, but there were some holdouts who wondered if he really had the goods. Along with an Olympic medal, and title belts at junior welterweight and welterweight, Cotto has rejuvenated boxing in New York and Atlantic City, bringing his large Puerto Rican following wherever he goes. He may not be the face of boxing, but he is the face of the welterweight division. ***Grade: A-***

MARKETABILITY: He is trying very hard to make himself marketable, improving his English so he can converse with the folks at ESPN and HBO. The only drawback is that his natural disposition is on the sober and serious side. He's a private person, not likely to abuse stardom or spend much time on the red carpet. An interesting HBO segment filmed with golf legend Chi Chi Rodriguez helped a little bit, but it wasn't enough to make us think Cotto is the next De La Hoya. Still, his popularity with Puerto Rican and hardcore fans are probably all he needs. ***Grade: B+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He's trained and managed by his uncle Evangelista, and father Miguel Angel, although there have been rumors of friction with Evangelista. Promoter Bob Arum has brought Cotto along perfectly, matching him carefully at first, and then upping the ante a bit at a time. Cotto has lead a clean life in Puerto Rico, the only controversy being a protection order filed against the mother of his child during the spring of 2007, when he was training to fight Judah. The woman was banned from Cotto's house and the Bairoa Gym where he was training. He lifted the ban a few days after the fight. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: If all goes according to plan, Cotto will have fought Antonio Margarito by the time this issue hits the newsstands, and if he's won, Cotto will be riding even higher than before. Still, without a marquee opponent, namely Mayweather or De La Hoya, there is a question as to whether Cotto can crash the mainstream. If he gets past Margarito, there are incredible possibilities for Cotto. A fight with Ricky Hatton isn't out of the question, and De La Hoya has teasingly mentioned Cotto as a possible farewell opponent. If that's the case, Cotto had better get ready for his close-up. ***Grade: A-***

PHOTO BY JEFF ZELEVANSKY/GETTY IMAGES

Miguel Cotto rocks Shane Mosley with a right hand during their exciting November 10, 2008, bout at Madison Square Garden, which Cotto won by a close, hard-fought decision.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Shane Mosley

44-5 (37)

Welterweight

TALENT: Mosley has fast hands, quick feet, diligence, and poise. He also has a backlog of experience to fall back on. He is everything a veteran star should be. He can hit with some power and he can still flash a combination to take your breath away. Against a much younger Miguel Cotto, Mosley pressed the action for 12 rounds, and was still in pursuit at the final bell, only to lose on points. The losses to Winky Wright and Vernon Forrest seem buried in the past; they can be written off as losses to bigger men with awkward styles. He's getting hit more now than in the past, which indicates his reflexes are not what they used to be. Be that as it may, all fighters should be as talented as Mosley, and at 147 he's still a player. ***Grade: A-***

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

ACHIEVEMENT: How many times has Mosley been written off? Two losses to Forrest and two to Wright would've been enough to put most fighters on the back burner. But Mosley wins some, he loses some, and he keeps returning. His two wins over De La Hoya look good on his resume, but the real achievement in his career is that he's maintained his status when other fighters might have faded away. Even after his recent loss to Cotto, he can't be dismissed. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: Mosley has never been marketable in the Madison Avenue sense, even when he was the most dominant lightweight in the world. He's likeable—so likable, in fact, that when he says his alleged involvement in the BALCO steroid scandal happened without his knowing, we want to believe him—but he just doesn't register very high on the mainstream charisma scale. But magnetism is like punching power: You can develop it to some degree, but it's better to be born with some. Mosley wasn't born with much of the former, but he's done all right without it. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He inspires loyalty in the people around him, including his wife/manager Jin, and his partners at Golden Boy Promotions. He seems happy to have his father, Jack Mosley, back in his corner after a brief separation. Jin is viewed by many as a hardnosed businessperson and she has helped make Mosley rich. ***Grade: A***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He's in a tough spot. He may no longer be a major attraction, so there's some justification when a fighter like Mayweather blows off suggestions that he should fight him. On the other hand, Mosley is too good to be considered a journeyman, so fighters on the way up aren't likely to risk fighting him. His bout with Zab Judah might have provided some indication as to where his future lies, but it was canceled when Judah injured himself. Also the BALCO cloud is growing darker, which certainly won't help. Still, there is at least one more big fight in his future. ***Grade: C+***

Antonio Margarito

36-5 (26)
with 1 no-contest

IBF Welterweight Titleholder

TALENT: Margarito is a brawler who can box a little. Or maybe he's boxer who is more comfortable brawling his way to victory. Margarito, known as the "Tijuana Tornado," uses uppercuts, rabbit punches, rib-cracking hooks to the body, and a lashing right cross to get the job done. He's a subtle pressure fighter who smartly walks you down, and before you know it he's right on your throat. He seems to get better with age, and at 30 he's in his prime. He's strong as a horse and is always in good condition for a fight. Other than a tendency to cut and a habit of starting slowly, he's a bona fide bad ass.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: After a brief amateur career, Margarito was still learning the trade when he entered the professional ranks in 1994 at age 16. He lost a few fights early on, but, starting in 1996, he began whacking through some good opponents, including veterans David Kamau and Frankie Randall. He won the vacant WBO welterweight belt by beating Antonio Diaz in 2002. After losing on a cut-induced technical decision to Daniel Santos, he went on another hot streak, stopping Sebastian Lujan (and nearly tearing his ear off in the process), Kermit Cintron, and Manuel Gomez, earning the distinction of being "the most avoided man in boxing." When he looked less than brilliant during a decision win over Joshua Clottey and then dropped a close verdict to Paul Williams, we began hedging over Margarito's status as one of boxing's best. Since then he's stopped a tarnished Golden Johnson in one round and then destroyed Cintron a second time, winning the IBF welterweight strap.

Grade: B+

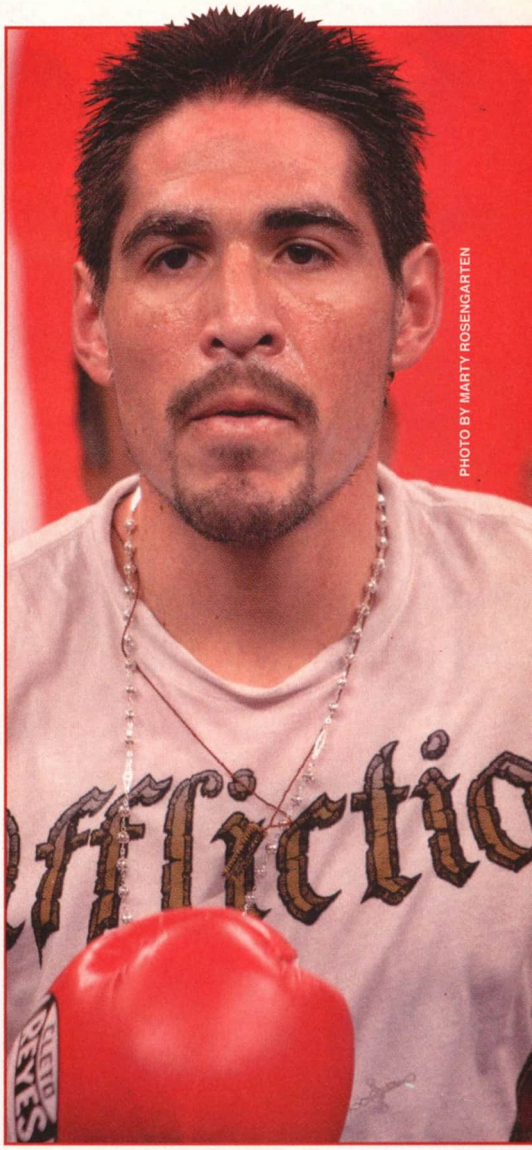


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

MARKETABILITY: Margarito is a hardcore fan's fighter, and he's in a position to make some real money if he's knocked off Cotto by the time you read this. In a way, he's this year's Jose Luis Castillo, a solid pro with a relentless style that has emerged from the ranks of the unknowns to become a commodity. He is fortunate to be fighting in a hot division, and he's able to get into the mix of big names. He's not likely to crack the mainstream in any big way, but he could become Mexico's next fistic hero in the wake of Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales if he's the first to beat Cotto.

Grade: B-

SUPPORT SYSTEM: He is managed by Sergio Diaz and Francisco Espinoza, and trained by Javier Capetillo, a veteran trainer who also works with Jorge Arce. Margarito has been promoted for most of his career by Top Rank. For a while he was cranky that Top Rank seemed to focus solely on Cotto, but as soon as he was matched with Cotto, Bob Arum has been referring to Margarito as a star.

Grade: B+

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It all depends on how he does against Cotto. A win makes him one of the elite. A loss, as long as it's entertaining, keeps him right where he is, which isn't a bad place to be.

Grade: A- (if he's beaten Cotto)***; B-*** (if he's lost)

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Ricky Hatton

44-1 (31)

World Junior Welterweight Champion

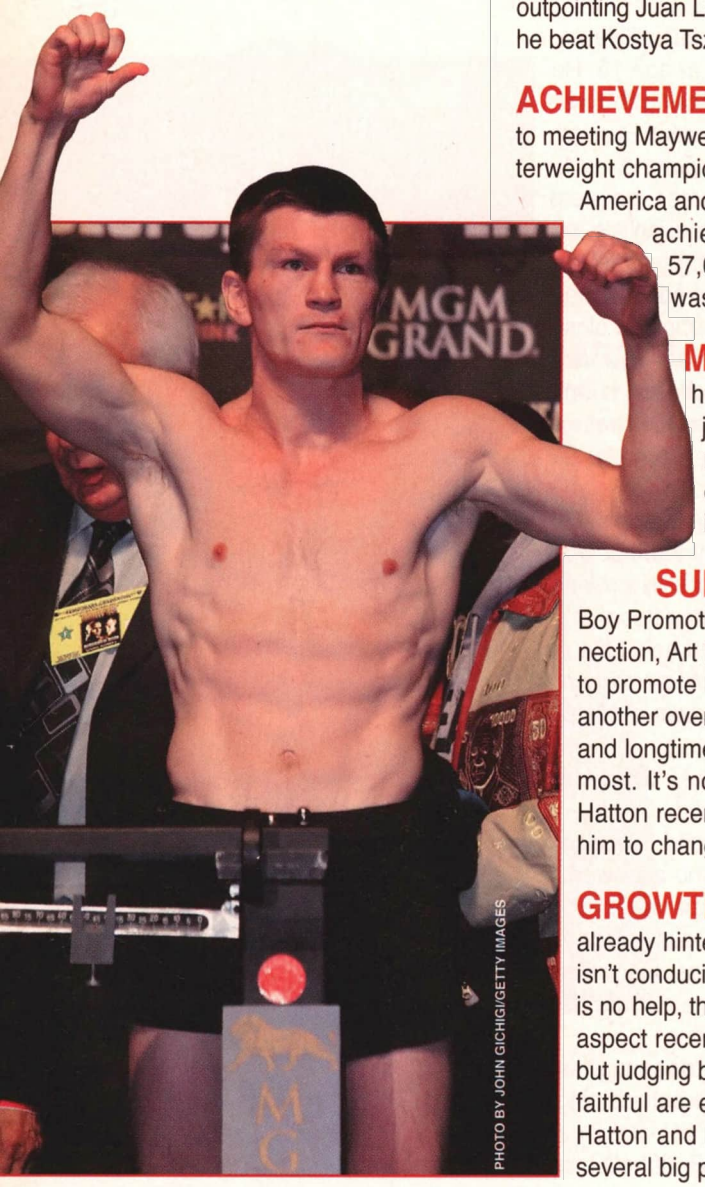


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

TALENT: He's a bulldog, mauling and mangling opponents, lashing at them with left hooks. He has fast hands and good movement, but there are stretches where he forgets finesse and relies too much on clinching. When he's at his best, he uses in-fighting to chip away at an opponent's core. He used to have a tendency to cut badly around the eyebrows, but that has been less of a problem in recent fights. He's gallant, sturdy, flashy, and feeds off of the crowd. Since last year's list, he has been knocked out by Floyd Mayweather and he looked less than his best outpointing Juan Lazcano. While no longer the full-bore force of nature he was when he beat Kostya Tszyu in 2005, he's still unbeaten at 140 pounds. ***Grade: B+***

ACHIEVEMENT: Hatton has gone from beating obscure fighters on *ShoBox* to meeting Mayweather on HBO Pay-Per-View. Beating Tszyu for the junior welterweight championship may be his high-water mark as a fighter, but coming to America and maneuvering for the Mayweather fight was his greatest career achievement. His recent bout with Lazcano sold approximately 57,000 tickets, a record live gate for British boxing. In 2007, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire. ***Grade: A***

MARKETABILITY: He has a wacky sense of humor, a huge and adoring fan base, and he's brighter than the average jock. He's appeared in some UK print ads, usually for boxing related items such as gym gear and fitness drinks. Hatton enjoys his life, and fighting in sold-out UK arenas twice a year is probably all the attention he needs. ***Grade: A-***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Hatton recently signed with Golden Boy Promotions, which is an improvement over his previous American connection, Art Pelullo's Banner Promotions. GBP may have lost out on the bid to promote Manny Pacquiao exclusively, but in Hatton they have landed another overseas cash cow. Along with dad Ray Hatton as business adviser and longtime trainer Bill Graham holding the pads, Hatton is better off than most. It's not all roses, though—HBO passed on the Lazcano fight, and Hatton recently complained that his popularity in Manchester has caused him to change his address and seek more security. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He may have reached his peak. He has already hinted that his career won't be a long one, partly because his style isn't conducive to longevity. Also, porking up the way he does between fights is no help, though there has reportedly been some minor improvement in that aspect recently. He's tentatively scheduled to face Paulie Malignaggi next, but judging by their two recent performances, few outside of his Manchester faithful are especially thrilled. Don't dismiss a crazy dream match between Hatton and Manny Pacquiao. Hatton is probably past his fiery prime, but several big paydays await. ***Grade: B***

Amir Khan

17-0 (13)

Lightweight

TALENT: He's a good, stand-up fighter with graceful foot work and fast hands. A tall lightweight, he usually enters the ring with advantages in height, reach, speed, and youth. He can punch too. In fact, there's a bit of the young Oscar De La Hoya in Khan's style. He hasn't been through any stern tests yet, so we can't say much about his character. Still, he has the goods to be a quality player for years to come. ***Grade: A-***

ACHIEVEMENT: Since appearing on last year's list of All-Stars, he's beaten some experienced foes, including Graham Earl (KO 1) and Gairy St. Clair (W 12). Martin Kristjansen lasted into the seventh round before being stopped. Undefeated in 17 pro bouts, Khan is moving steadily toward the top. At age 21, he seems a child among the rest of the lightweight division. ***Grade: B***

MARKETABILITY: Khan is already a very popular figure in the UK. He often uses his position to encourage better relations between British Muslims and the wider community, particularly in his hometown of Bolton. A careless driving citation in 2007 is the sole black mark on Khan's resume, which already includes several major endorsement deals. ***Grade: A***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Things are a bit up in the air for Khan. He recently parted ways with his longtime trainer, Oliver Harrison, with the scuttlebutt being that Harrison was not happy with Khan's growing fame, preferring the fighter to focus on training rather than public appearances. Although currently working with Dean Powell, Khan has expressed a desire for an American trainer. For years Khan trained at the headquarters of his favorite football club, the Bolton Wanderers, but he's hinted that he may move to the US, which might cast a slight shadow over his relationship with UK fans (think Lennox Lewis). Frank Warren has expertly promoted him throughout his pro career. ***Grade: B***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It's upward and onward for this youngster. His future will be as a UK star, but he'll be smart to also fight in some American rings. He probably won't ape the Calzaghe routine and wait until he's 36 to fight in the USA. At press time, he was scheduled to face jaded Michael Gomez in the UK, which some view as a backward step. With only 17 fights, there's still some time between now and when Khan is ready to fight for the championship. Since he's still a growing boy, Khan may not be a lightweight much longer. Regardless of where Khan lands, his future looks bright. ***Grade: A***

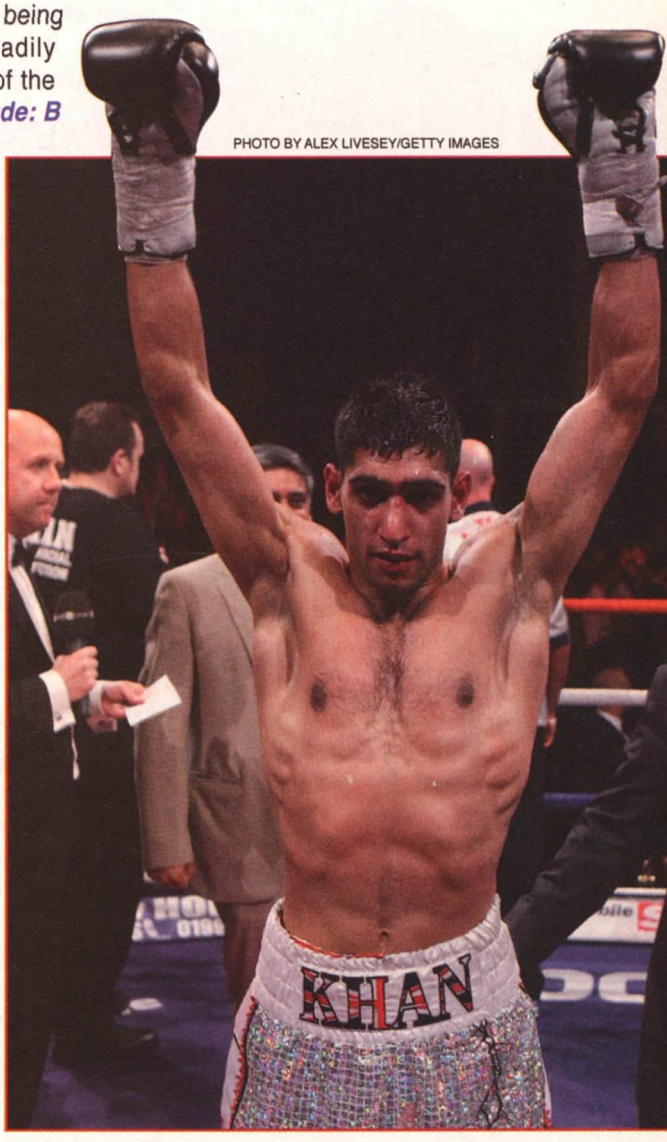


PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Manny Pacquiao

46-3-2 (35)

World Junior Lightweight Champion

TALENT: Pacquiao is one of the best southpaws of all-time. He's faster and more powerful than most, and he can catch you at unexpected moments with short, crisp punches. He throws a left cross with speed and precision, and when he uses his good foot speed to charge into an opponent's range, it's among the most exciting moments in boxing today, even if he is a bit off-balance. He occasionally uses a good right-hand to the body. The only drawback is that he has so many weapons in his arsenal that he sometimes forgets to use all of them. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: He came from a dirt-poor background and is now practically a religion unto himself in the Philippines. There were no Olympic medals, no cash bonuses from HBO, and no major promoters waiting to sign him. Regardless, he succeeded in amazing fashion. In a way, Pacquiao is the antithesis of fighters such as De La Hoya and Mayweather. ***Grade: A+***

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

MARKETABILITY: Pacquiao is what a crossover star looks like. Travel down virtually any street in Manila and you'll see Pac-Man's face somewhere on a billboard, a magazine cover, or an advertisement. You'll hear his songs on the radio and see his movies at the cinema. In America, he is a big boxing draw, but in the Philippines he is as much of an icon as any jock we've had in these here parts, and that includes the historic American trio of Muhammad Ali, Babe Ruth, and Michael Jordan. ***Grade: A+***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: After escaping the clutches of Murad Muhammad, Pacquiao has been promoted Bob Arum, who treats him like the golden goose of boxing. There have also been reports of various hangers-on diverting quite a lot of Manny's money into their own bank accounts. Pacquiao's training is in the capable hands of Freddie Roach, who laments the number of distractions in Paquiao's life. But in his second bout with Juan Manual Marquez, Pacquiao seemed strong and focused. After his brief attempt at politics and a few years of hard partying, Pacquiao seems more settled and mature. He has grown into being a star. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Depending on whom you talk to, Pacquiao has either peaked already or the best is yet to come. A third bout with Marquez seems inevitable, although the outcome would probably be another close fight that fans would argue about. Pacquiao seems to have lost a fraction of his old fire, but it's to be expected when you fight balls-to-the-wall all the time. Also, it's hard to be a whirlwind with the weight of an entire nation on your back. At 29, he's moving up to the lightweight class by challenging WBA titlist David Diaz. There are plenty of lightweight opponents who would stretch Pacquiao to the max, including THE RING's lightweight champion, Joel Casamayor, and alphabet titlist Nate Campbell. We wouldn't bet the house and car that Pacquiao can maintain his momentum at 135, but we'll bet he'll still be exciting. In the meantime, Top Rank has requested that the decision of whether or not to vacate the 130-pound title be put off until after the Diaz fight, a request that THE RING will honor. ***Grade: A-***

Juan Manuel Marquez

48-4-1 (35)

Junior Lightweight

TALENT: Like a high-speed chess player, Marquez takes opponents apart with a smart, technical style. He's a gifted boxer-puncher, and while he built his record by being a counterpuncher, in recent years he's been more aggressive. Oddly enough, this talented ring general has a history of faltering during big fights, dating back to his points loss to Freddie Norwood in 1999. Even during his finest hours, against Marco Antonio Barrera and Manny Pacquiao, he has found himself on the canvas. Whether it's a mental lapse or just bad luck, he's the sort of guy who would win a batting title and then go hitless during the playoffs. Still, at his best, Marquez has all the tools a fighter needs. Prior to his loss to Pacquiao, he boxed rings around solid fringe contender Rocky Juarez. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: After so many years in the shadow of his more charismatic countrymen Barrera and Erik Morales, Marquez turned out to be the last man standing. He notched a close win over a faded Barrera and is a constant thorn in Pacquiao's side. When his career is over, he may be remembered best by Mexican fans for being Pacquiao's toughest opponent. ***Grade: B+***

MARKETABILITY: Marquez has achieved that rare thing in boxing, where he's known by his initials, J.M.M. As long as Pacquiao is around, Marquez can be a star. He and Pac-Man could fight a hundred times, and every fight would be close and exciting. Pacquiao's hardball style takes Marquez out of his technical mode and forces him into being something different. But against less than spectacular opponents, Marquez can be less than spectacular himself. That's why he's pounding the drum so hard for a third bout with Pacquiao. He knows Pac-Man makes him more interesting, not just financially, but artistically as well. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: After Marquez parted ways with Top Rank, he was scooped up by Golden Boy Promotions. GBP promoted the Marquez-Barrera bout in 2007, which brought Marquez in the GBP fold. They'll treat him right. If Ignacio Beristain, Marquez' longtime manager and trainer, lets GBP do their thing, Marquez will prosper. The last time Beristain got in the way, Marquez ended up in Indonesia, where he lost a close decision to Chris John. ***Grade: B+***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: With 35-year-old Marquez, we're not thinking about long-term growth. He needs to strike now before fans forget how close his rematch with Pacquiao was. At press time there were rumors that Marquez was considering a move to lightweight, with a possible October bout with world lightweight champ Joel Casamayor also being discussed. All of this makes the inevitable third bout with Pacquiao all the juicier. ***Grade: B+***

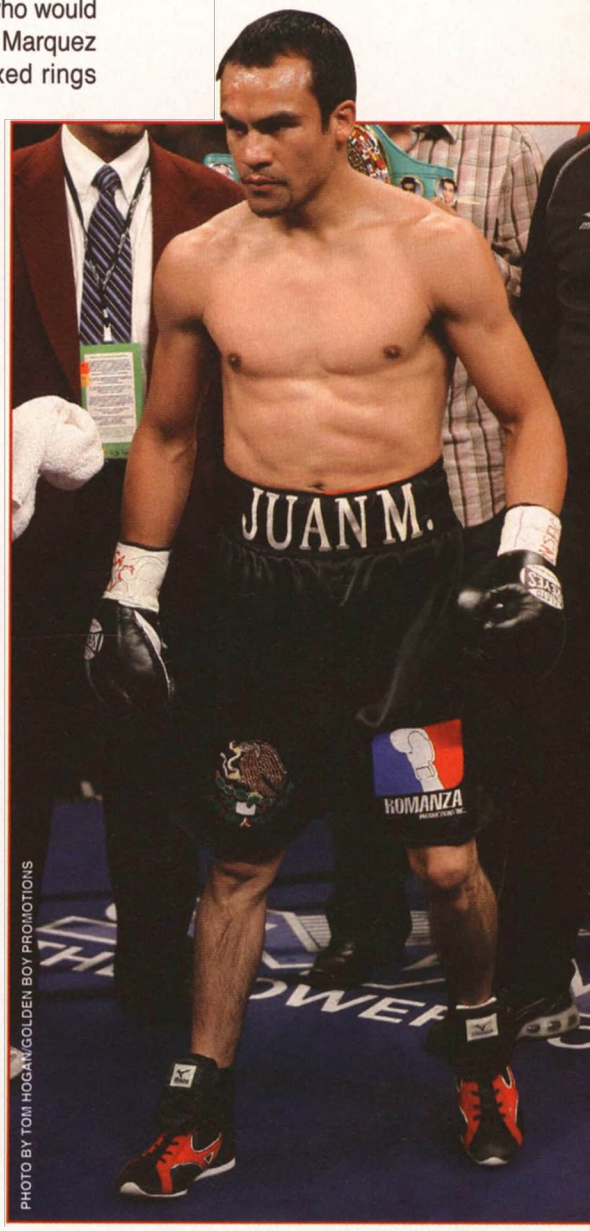


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Israel Vazquez staggers Rafael Marquez into the ropes with a right hand during their breathtaking rubber match, which Vazquez won via decision on March 1, 2008, in Carson, California.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Israel Vazquez

43-4 (31)

World Junior Featherweight Champion

TALENT: It always helps a fighter's career when he wins two out of three bouts in a legendary trilogy, as Vasquez did against Rafael Marquez. In those three fights Vazquez showed his entire arsenal. He is gifted with sound boxing skills, an incredible amount of guts, power in both hands, an impressive left-hook right cross combo, cat-like reflexes, endurance, and great ring generalship. He has been a bleeder throughout his career, but he draws his share of blood too. He can wear you down with a traditional body attack or he can score explosive, first-round knockouts. He can also box his way to a points win. He has no secret weapon; he's simply very good at what he does. He's been stopped three times, the first time in 1996 when he was a 19-year-old bantamweight, the second time by Oscar Larios in 2002. Marquez also stopped him in their first bout due to a broken nose. Those losses have helped him become the pro's pro that he is today. ***Grade: A-***

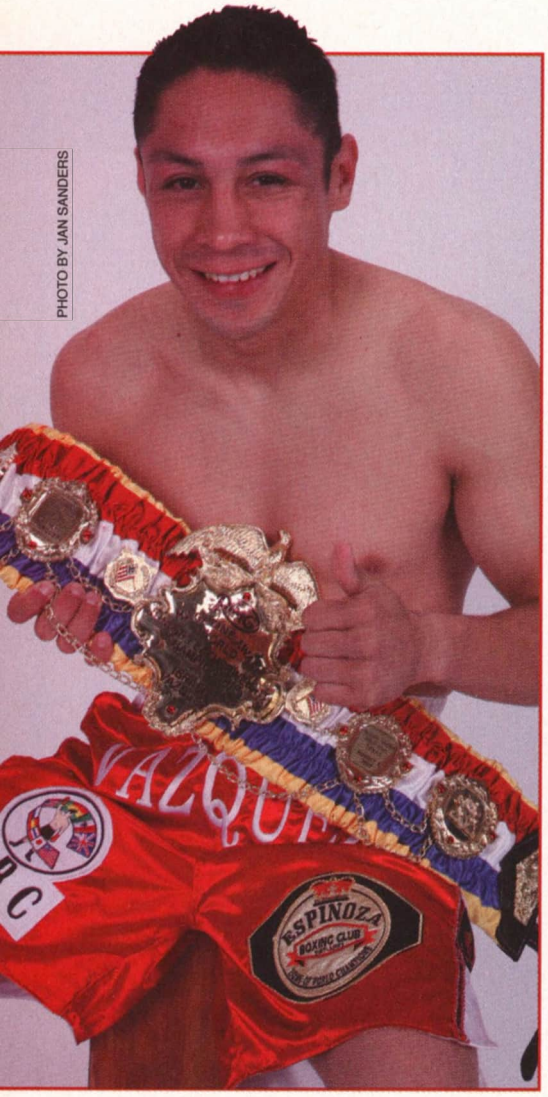


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

ACHIEVEMENT: Prior to his three bouts with Marquez, he had a dynamic trilogy with Larios, winning the first (KO 1), losing the second (KO by 12), and winning the third (KO 3). He has beaten a who's who of junior featherweights, including Jhonny Gonzalez, Ivan Hernandez, and Jorge Eliecir Julio. He won 20 of his first 21 bouts, fighting mostly in Mexico and California, before dropping a split decision to Marcos Licona. In 2004, he won the vacant IBF super bantam title by beating Jose Luis Valbuena by 12th-round stoppage. His second win over Larios earned him THE RING 122-pound title, which he lost to Marquez and regained. ***Grade: A-***

MARKETABILITY: Despite his resemblance to Chris Kattan of *Saturday Night Live*, Vazquez is not a flamboyant sort at all. He's a friendly, down-to-earth chap from Mexico City, with the potential to be a superstar, at least inside of the ring. Don't think Chavez or De La Hoya, but he could be a pocket (and technically superior) version of Arturo Gatti, bleeding and battling his way into our hearts. Don't let his mild manner fool you; the way he stormed out for the 12th round of the third Marquez bout is proof that he wants to be a star. ***Grade: B***

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Vazquez was trained by Freddie Roach until 2007, when Rudy Perez, the trainer of Marco Antonio Barrera, picked up the reigns and appears to have made Vazquez a better fighter. He is managed by Frank Espinoza, who has a reputation for treating his fighters extremely well, which was evident by the way he obtained the best possible medical help for Vazquez following his punishing fights with Rafael Marquez. The job of promoting Vazquez is shared by Sycuan Ringside Promotions and Golden Boy Promotions. ***Grade: A-***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Still on the mend after the Marquez rubber match, Vazquez has been basking in his newfound cachet. A fourth tussle with Marquez is a possibility, although Vazquez has other options. Jorge Arce has been calling him out, which would produce a good purse. Then there's undefeated a rapid-rising Juan Manuel Lopez, a far more dangerous challenger. There's also talk of a move to featherweight. ***Grade: B+***

Chris John

41-0-1 (22)

WBA Featherweight Titleholder

TALENT: John's nickname is "The Dragon," but he's more of a hummingbird. His fleet-footed, quick-punching style has taken him to the WBA featherweight title, where he has remained since 2005. He's evasive and can be defensive minded, but has a mental toughness that has kept him undefeated. ***Grade: A***

ACHIEVEMENT: John is one of the rare martial artists to achieve acclaim in boxing, having once been a member of Indonesia's national Wushu team. He began his professional boxing career 10 years ago, beating a string of easy opponents until 2002, when he fought veteran Ratanachi Sor Vorapin. He passed that stern test by winning a 12-round decision. In 2004, he defeated Osamu Satu for the WBA featherweight title. In 2006, he won a controversial decision over Juan Manuel Marquez, creating the myth that John was another protected oversees fighters. In reality, it was a close contest, meaning John is at least on a par with Marquez. Since then, John has scored wins over Renan Acosta, Jose Rojas, Zaiki Takemoto, and Roinet Caballero, hardly a prestigious group. Still, Takemoto and Caballero both quit on their stools between rounds, showing that John can take the fight right out of a man. ***Grade: B+***

MARKETABILITY: He has yet to crack the American marketplace, but John is a major star in Indonesia, kind of an Indonesian Pacquiao, albeit on a lower level. After moving his training base to Australia, he's also developed a following Down Under as well, and having won many fights in Japan, has a growing fan base there too. He may be the least likely star on our list to fight in Las Vegas, but he has expressed a desire to fight in America, and was scheduled to defend against Michael Lozado in Hidalgo, Mexico, but the bout was canceled. Actually, he's not the sort of exciting fighter that American promoters would court, and after Marquez lost a squeaker to John on John's home turf, it's not likely that many marquee American fighters would want to try their luck with him in Jakarta. ***Grade: A*** (in Indonesia)***; C+*** (outside of the Pacific Rim)

SUPPORT SYSTEM: In 2004, citing an uneven allocation of fight fees, John dropped Indonesian trainer Sutan Rambing and joined up with manager/trainer Craig Christian of Australia, which created a bit of controversy and a long court battle back home in Jakarta. John was brought into boxing by his father, Johan Tjahjadi (aka Thjia Foek Sem), a former amateur boxer. John has worked with a number of Indonesian promoters, including Zaenal Tayeb and Albert Papilaya. ***Grade: B***

GROWTH POTENTIAL: John's growth depends on how much he wants to grow. If he wants to follow Manny Paquiao's footsteps, he'll come to the US and start taking on all comers. If he's content to be a cottage industry in Indonesia, then he'll never be any more than he is right now. Still, if he can keep making fighters quit between rounds, he might create some interest. A bout with IBF titlist Robert Guerrero would be worthwhile, as it would fill the current world championship vacancy at 126 and give the winner THE RING belt. ***Grade: B*** ■

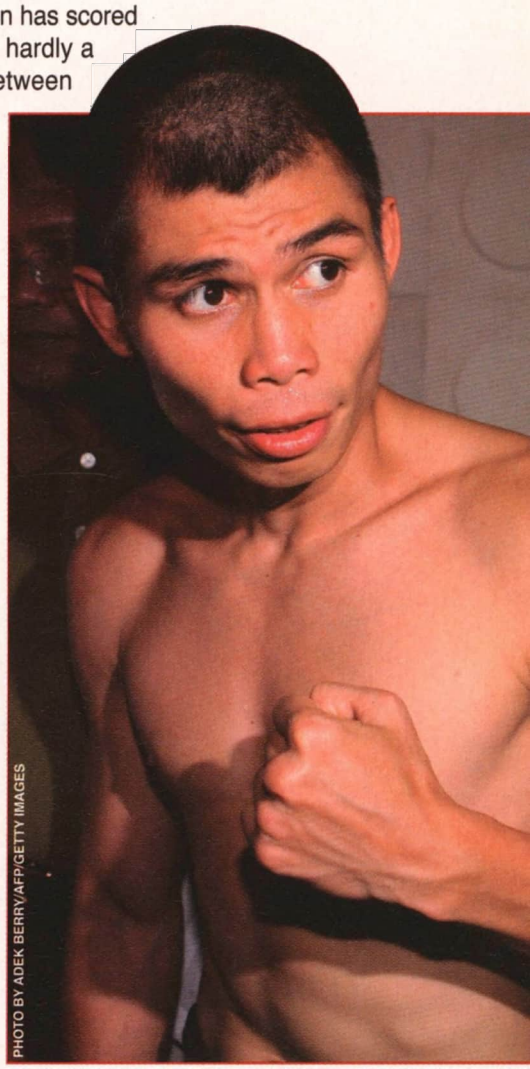


PHOTO BY ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TIMOTHY TIME!

Obscure Bradley To Become A Clocks Witter Junior Welter Player

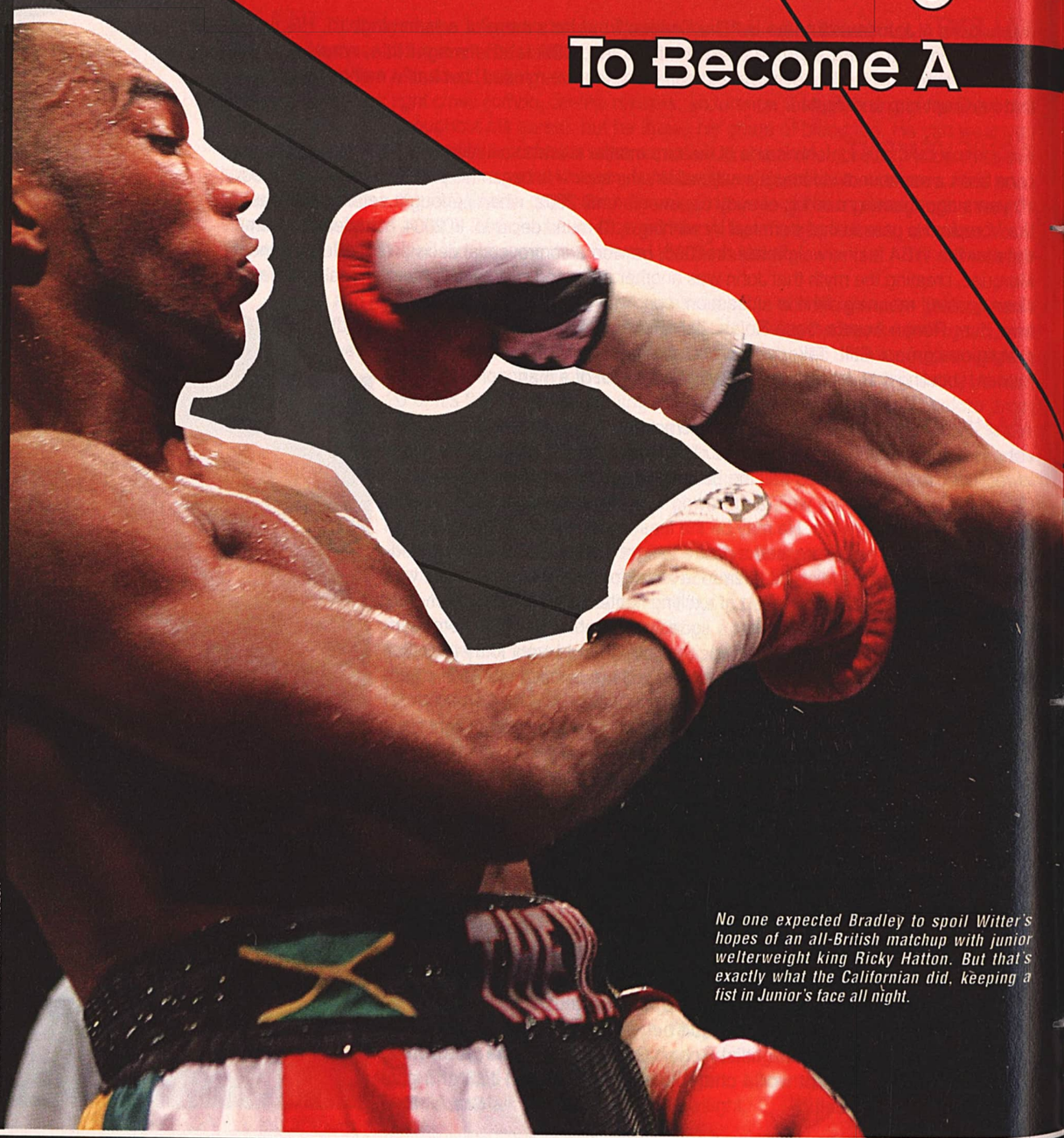
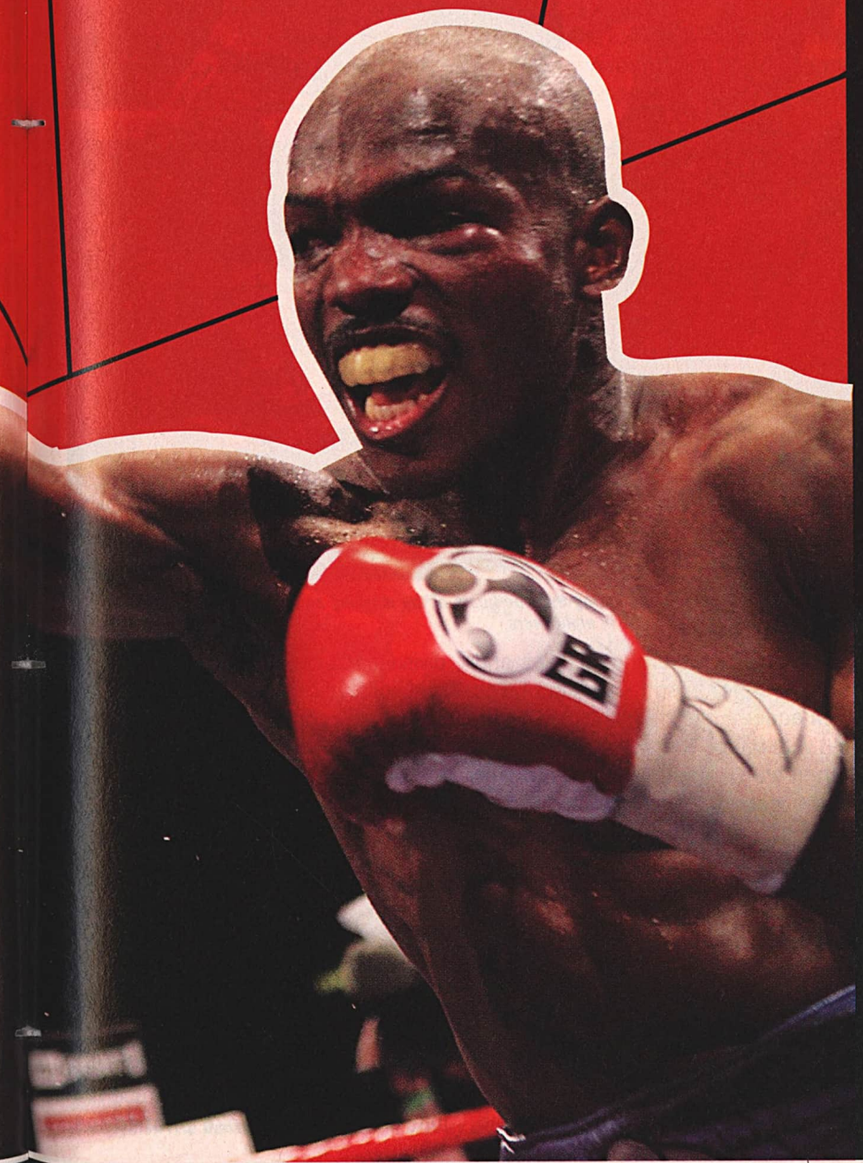


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGESA

No one expected Bradley to spoil Witter's hopes of an all-British matchup with junior welterweight king Ricky Hatton. But that's exactly what the Californian did, keeping a fist in Junior's face all night.



By Brian Doogan

For most of his life, Steve Farhood has asked questions of fighters, probing questions, fair questions, questions that have revealed character and insight. But in the early hours of May 10 in Nottingham, England, some time around 3:30 a.m. in the lobby of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the veteran boxing writer and broadcaster found himself asking the obvious question: "Why are you not sleeping?" Timothy Bradley, who would challenge Junior Witter for the WBC light welterweight title less than 20 hours later, smiled at his inquisitor and replied almost nonchalantly, "You know, I could ask you the same question!"

With the ice broken, they talked some more. Farhood explained that he was struggling to adjust his body clock from American East Coast time and Bradley revealed that he made a conscious decision to sleep during the day between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m., then to get up and remain awake during the

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Bradley wanted to stay on the same time as home, so it meant staying awake during the wee hours of the morning and sleeping in the afternoon. It didn't seem to hamper his effectiveness against Witter, who lost for the first time in eight years.

night, sticking as closely as he could to American West Coast time. During the course of the conversation, however, the unbeaten but untested Californian made an ominous admission: "I'll be glad when it's over."

Farhood interpreted that as a bad sign.

"Yes, I was anxious to get it over and done with," Bradley told THE RING one week later from his home in Palm Springs, California. "The training was done, I was ready and I just wanted to get in the ring and get the job done. I felt anxious, but it was not a case of the occasion getting to me all of a sudden. I knew how big an opportunity this was and I prepared for it, so I knew that I was well equipped to handle it and come out with the biggest win of my career. When we bumped into one another in the lobby of the hotel, I told Steve that it was all mental, and as long as I could perform in the ring, all of the things that I had worked on in camp, I would not have any problems. I believed in myself that much, but I also realized that the moment had arrived when I needed to deliver."

The 24-year-old, nicknamed "Desert Storm," delivered the kind of performance that elevated him instantly into the upper reaches of the 140-pound division. His speed, elusiveness, power, and punch placement proved too much for the 34-year-old Witter to deal with and "The Hitter" from Bradford, England, suffered the first defeat of his career since being outpointed by Zab Judah eight years ago in Glasgow.

For Witter, this was a devastating blow, ruining his chances—however slim—of securing an all-British showdown against world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton.

"I don't think he'll fight me now," Witter admitted candidly.

A class act, he made no reference to the shattering news he had received just a couple of weeks prior to the

bout that his father, Wilson, had been diagnosed to be suffering from a serious (undisclosed) illness. "Junior had been training [in Sheffield] and then running to and from Bradford because of his dad's illness, and that sort of thing going on in your life would have an effect on anybody," Brendan Ingle, Witter's trainer, said to THE RING. "Taking nothing away from the other kid, this was swimming around in his head for two weeks leading into the fight and it is something that he and his family will have to deal with over the coming weeks and months as well."

Meanwhile, Bradley has been adjusting to his own dramatically changed circumstances. When he left for England he was an unknown quantity outside of his native California, but after returning home to a quiet family celebration, he threw open the doors of his gym to the media and the reaction was overwhelming. "Everything has been real busy since I got back here," he reported. A celebratory luncheon was held at a location in downtown Los Angeles and dignitaries also honored him in his hometown as well as in nearby Riverside. Like so many fighters, however, his life might have turned out so differently.

By his own admission, Bradley endangered his prospects of ever making it out of the ghetto by hanging around with thugs and gang members. Baggy pants were his regular apparel and petty crime and drugs were an ever-present danger. His parents did their best to keep him on the right path, but it was the road that led to a boxing gym that proved to be his salvation. A neighborhood friend named Julio brought him along when he was nine years old, and the way that Bradley sees it now is that he never looked back.

"I grew up in the north side of Palm Springs and it was tough, man. It was the ghetto, full of drug dealers, gang-bangers, and all of that stuff. If you weren't careful, there could be something bad around the next street corner, that's what it seemed like," he recalled. "To a kid, all of that wild stuff seems glamorous and you get sidetracked. I was hanging out with bad company and getting into fights at school, wearing baggy pants that only went halfway up my butt. My parents had to really stay on me, but when you're that age, you don't listen to your parents, do you? Not when your peers are out on the street and they're taking you in a different direction.

"Basically, I was hanging out with gangsters and thugs and, eventually, I

PHOTO BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Before receiving his big break against Witter, Bradley fought in relative obscurity for much of his career, building his record on a steady diet of capable journeymen like Donald Camarena, whom Bradley decisioned easily in a 10-round bout in June 2007.

Bradley nails Witter with a jab, as the two battled back and forth for the first five rounds (above). The course of the fight changed in the sixth when Bradley dropped Witter with an arcing right to the head (below) and dominated from then on.

would have gone into a life of drugs. I was already pretty good at going into the store to steal and getting away without getting caught ... and I was only eight, nine, 10 years old. So you can see where things were going. Then one day my friend, Julio, took me to the boxing gym and I loved it straight away.

"My parents said to me that, if I wanted to keep going to the boxing gym, I would have to pick up my grades at school and almost overnight my life was changed around. I guess that the sport of boxing can do this for a person. It certainly did for me."

From his early days in the Palm Springs Boxing Club, Bradley's father, Timothy Sr., a school district security officer, was a major influence, motivating him and making him earn his Christmas gifts, for instance, by insisting that he complete 500 pushups and 500 situps first. Gradually, the rebellious streak in Bradley's nature became curbed, but the process was never easy. In second grade, he was kicked out of school because it seemed like every day a teacher would catch him fighting.

"I remember running into a woman a few years ago and she confronted me about an incident when I was little. I had flipped her off and called her a word that I would never repeat now and it was awful," Bradley acknowledged, obviously embarrassed. "I said to her, 'I said that? I'm so sorry, but I was a kid.' I felt really, bad, but I had a totally different mindset as a kid. I was very short-tempered and I couldn't control it. I don't know why I was angry, because my parents always did the best that they possibly could for me. I was just a mean kid, a bully, that's the only way I can explain it. It was only when I started boxing that I was able to control this side of my character."

He had been a promising track athlete over 400 and 800 meters, but he excelled with the gloves on, winning a national title at the under-19 level as

well as multiple Junior Olympic titles. His school grades improved and he gained entry to Northern Michigan University, where he studied to be a surgical technician. "I did two years at the university before I came back home for the 2004 Olympics and lost in the Box-offs," he said. "I would have gone back and finished, too, but I witnessed a really bad car accident and saw something that I didn't want to see, the victim's stomach all over the steering wheel. I just happened to come upon the scene and I guess I changed my mind there and then on having any kind of medical career. One day I plan to go back to school and maybe I'll study business, but for the moment, I am concentrating on my boxing career."

With no marketing tool, such as an Olympic medal, to kick-start his career, Bradley struggled to make an immediate impact. Ken Thompson, a fledgling boxing promoter, signed him up, and Alex Camponovo, the matchmaker for Thompson Boxing Promotions, tried to showcase his talent, but Bradley got booed in his second pro bout at the Doubletree Hotel in Ontario, California, when he boxed and moved and stuck out his tongue at his opponent, Raul Nunez. "Timmy came back to the gym, worked on the development of his style and now he can fight any way he chooses," said trainer Joel Diaz. "He can box against any guy out there, but he can bang them out, too, and that's an irresistible combination."

But his list of opponents remained unimpressive until a WBC eliminator at junior welterweight against former lightweight champion Jose Luis Castillo was scheduled to take place on March 8 in Cancun, Mexico. When Castillo failed to make weight, Bradley became Witter's mandatory challenger and the collapse of a proposed bout between Witter and Demetrius Hopkins thrust him into a title fight and his first appearance outside of California.

For five rounds, the bout was anyone's for the taking, but from the moment Bradley floored Witter with a powerful, looping right hand to the side of the head near the end of the sixth round, the issue never appeared to be in doubt, despite the judges rendering a split decision, 115-113 and 114-113 in favor of Bradley and 115-112 for Witter.

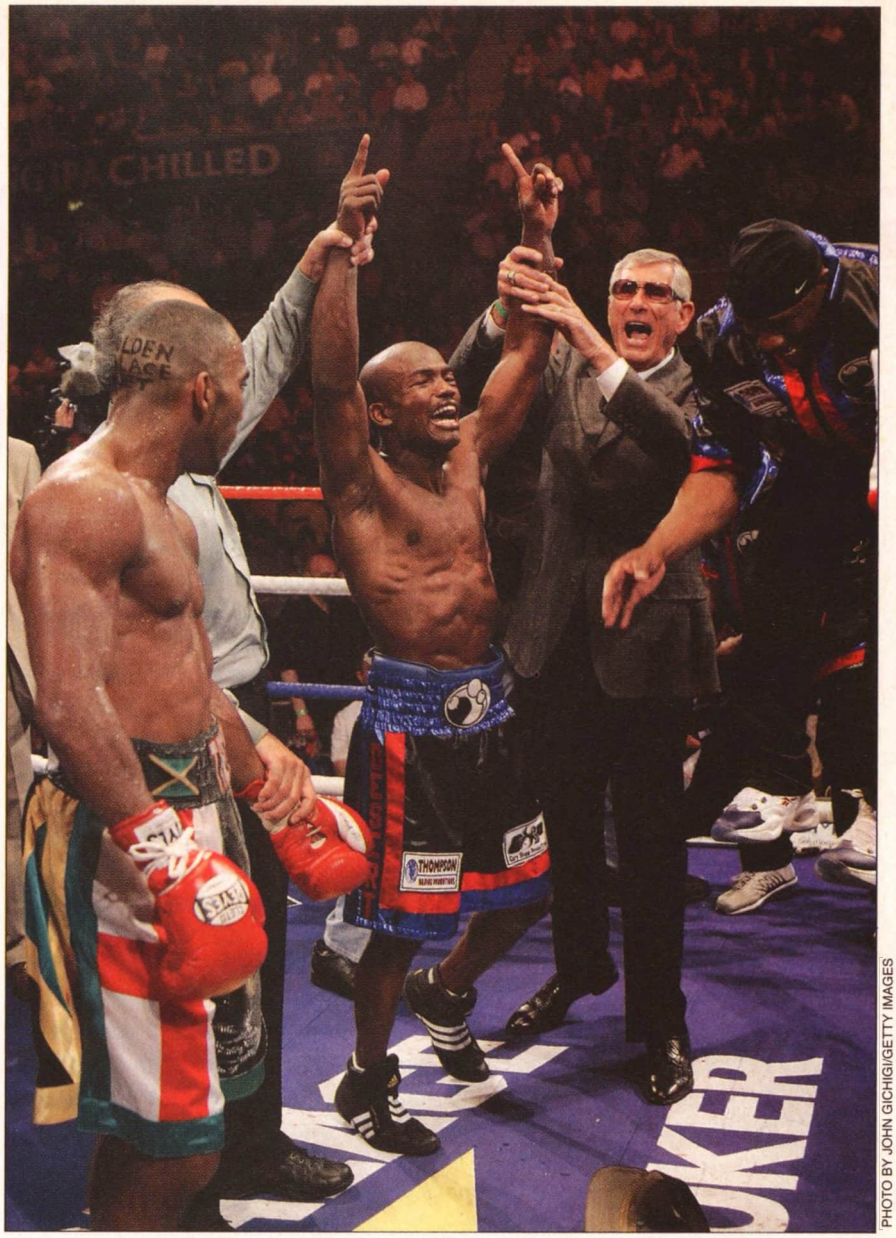


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Bradley finally realized a dream after living a dangerous lifestyle during childhood and adolescence. The newly crowned WBC junior welterweight titlist received a hearty welcome upon arriving home in Palm Springs, California.

"This fight has changed everything for me because there are so many possibilities in the junior welterweight division," said Bradley, 22-0 (11). "I could fight Witter in a rematch and that may happen, but I would also like to get a crack at Ricky Hatton. He's a bully, he has the heart of a lion, and, if you can't hit, he'll be in your face all night. But I showed against Witter that I do punch hard, so Ricky is the fight I want. Paulie Malignaggi [the IBF titleholder] is going to fight him later in the year, but I see Hatton being too much for him. Malignaggi will only have a chance if he uses his legs. He has to outbox Hatton, but if he can't stop the train, the train will run right over him.

"Me against Ricky would be a great fight because he's always coming to you and I'm a machine. I'm out there to seek and destroy. I'm what you call a hunter."

Witter was his unsuspecting prey in Nottingham, but when he next steps into the ring the heretofore unheralded hunter from Palm Springs will not go unnoticed. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

Kelly Pavlik

"I'm A Great Fighter—Not Just A Great White Fighter"

Kelly Pavlik is the world middleweight champion is a millionaire and is still concerned about gas prices. That's just the way he is. "The Ghost" still lives in the same tough Youngstown, Ohio, neighborhood he grew up in as a child. He still maintains relationships with childhood friends and lives and dies for Ohio State football—a religion in Pavlik's area of Ohio.

Pavlik is also starting to build a following beyond the boundaries of his beloved Youngstown.

In June, Pavlik made his first title defense, against overmatched Gary Lockett, before 7,168 at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall—with an estimated half of that crowd making the trek from Youngstown to see their fistic hero. It went as expected, with the rangy bomber blasting out Lockett in the third round. It was a nice commercial for Pavlik, 34-0 (30), whose name was bandied about in matches against world light heavyweight and world super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, and middleweight titlists Arthur Abraham and Felix Sturm.

Pavlik has stopped 10 of his last 11 opponents. He TKO'd Jermain Taylor in September 2007 to win the world middleweight championship—then beat Taylor again at a catchweight of 164 pounds by unanimous decision in February 2008. He's gone from someone everyone wanted to meet, to someone almost too dangerous to face.

THE RING Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with Pavlik and his father, Mike, soon after Pavlik's route of Lockett. Pavlik covered a variety of subjects, such as eating fried smelts while trying to sign autographs, dealing with being a superstar in a small Rust Belt city, and what it's like being a white world champion. He also spoke about how his life has changed and to his personal timetable when he'd like to retire from boxing. Santoliquito reports:

"What surprised me the most about Kelly is how animated he is within his inner circle. The calmest, most collected guy in his hotel suite during the photo shoot we conducted with Pavlik two days before the Lockett fight was Kelly himself. He has a great team around him, filled with childhood friends who you get the impression would jump in front of a speeding locomotive to save Kelly's life. The other thing that struck me is that Pavlik speaks Italian, and his father, Mike, is fluent in Italian. Just being around Kelly, you sense this supreme confidence in the guy. He is a real joy to be around."

The Ring: You've gone through a real metamorphosis over the last year. How much has life changed?

Kelly Pavlik: It's been kind of demanding, everyone has autograph sessions, pulling and tugging at you. Everyone wants a piece of me right now. I'll go to Chuck E. Cheese's with my daughter, and everyone is coming up and asking for pictures and it's so hard to keep an eye on the baby. It leaves you in a tough spot. You expect that people would have the same respect you have for them as they would have for you. It's like I belong to everyone. People will walk up to me as I'm eating fried smelts and they want me to sign a napkin or a piece of paper. My fingers are sticky from the smelts, and after I sign the napkin, I had a napkin stick to my fingers. That can be embarrassing (*laughs*). I'm supposed to be this cool celebrity who has sticky fingers (*laughs*). Don't get me wrong, I love it. I love my fans. I won't turn down anyone.

Mike Pavlik: He is pretty much the same. Kelly is just a simple kid. He wants to go out and hang with his buddies, and there isn't a whole lot that money can make him happy with. He doesn't crave new cars, and he has only a 1,100-square foot house with his little place in the basement, where he entertains and does his thing. That's all he wants. You have these young kids with money today, and before you know it, they get in way over their heads and they're in trouble. Tax-time, Uncle Sam comes looking for you—and before you know it, they never get out of a jam. Kelly does things the right way.

The Ring: But it seems that you are getting used to this life-change.

KP: I am a little bit. I keep the same routine, whether I'm training or in my daily life. I like to have my cup of coffee and the paper each morning. It can take maybe 10, 15 minutes. But someone will see me, and I have to talk to him or her. That's me. So now I'll send my fiancée to do that and she takes care of it. She gets my coffee and paper. Believe me, I love getting

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

up in the morning and going to the gas station and doing it. But now I go out and I'm gone for 25 minutes for something that usually takes me 10 minutes to do. I get spotted; it's not a bad thing. I don't get mad about it. I have a good time talking to anyone.

The Ring: You're not going to tell me you don't get any perks from being "Kelly Pavlik, world middleweight champion," are you?

KP: Oh, I get perks. The perks are good, but within reason, like going to see Ohio State and meeting the players. I live for Ohio State football. You want to

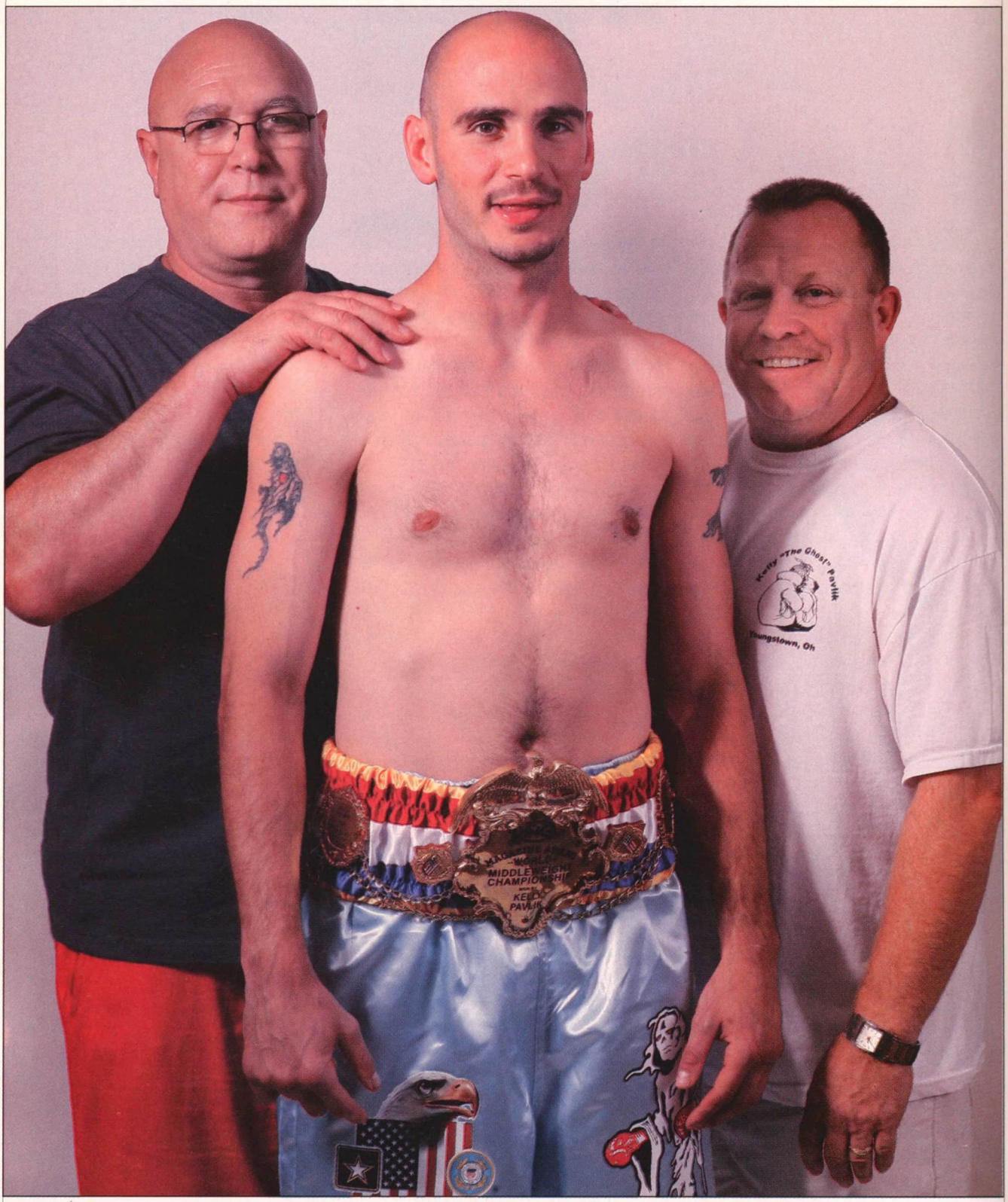


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Pavlik flanked by his winning team, father Mike, on Kelly's right, and trainer Jack Loew on the champ's left. Not much has changed since "The Ghost" became middleweight world champion, and Kelly says his team and his family keep his feet firmly planted to make sure his head doesn't swell.

know how to beat me? Have a fight during college football season and put an Ohio State game on the big scoreboard above. I'd be watching that instead of staying focused on the fight and probably get knocked out (*laughs*). I get good seats to see the Browns, the Indians. That stuff is good. I can use my popularity to raise money for charities and things. But I have a tough time seeing those kids. It gets me a little emotional.

The Ring: I saw the touching piece HBO did prior to the Gary Lockett fight on the impact you had on Dante DelSignore, the 14-year-old from Youngstown who was diagnosed with bone cancer. You seemed to hold up pretty well there. What happened?

KP: Yeah, I'm real tough (*laughs*). Put me in front of those kids in the hospital and I'm real tough (*laughs again*). You want to watch someone melt right before your eyes? Try and be courageous in front of those kids, who live with courage every day. I'm not the tough one.

I do a lot of work for Children's Hospital, St. Jude's, and the American Cancer Society. It's just that I have a hard time going in and seeing these kids. It grabs me. I have to admit it. I do as much as I can to help raise money and take care of these kids. I see sick kids all of the time. I was with a kid that died (*catches himself, as he's briefly overcome by a strain of emotion in his voice*). I'm not Jesus. They look at me as Jesus and that's their last wish; that they want me to do something for them. They want me to win.

You have to be strong just to see these kids with three months left—and they're f___ing babies. That eats at you. You know if you can help them out—before their time is done—you have to do it. *You have to do it.* That makes me feel good. But it's hard to deal with. I like being in the situation where I can win for these kids. What happened with Dante was completely out of nowhere. I didn't want any publicity for it. I didn't even know his brother sent a letter to the paper here. That's what brought so much attention to the story. I didn't want that. I just wanted to help the kid. We all have crosses to bear. But then you get out and see that someone always has a cross out there that's heavier than the cross you carry.

The Ring: If your new-found fame hasn't changed you, how about the money?

KP: I like to live close to the same way I did before I became world champion. I understand a lot more where my money is going. I don't live like "Money Mayweather" and I watch how I spend my money. You have taxes and you have to constantly figure things out. I want my money to work for me. You see these guys who make big money and they buy big houses and then they blow it. I want to have something when I get out of boxing. I want to be able to afford something within my means. I have a lot of people in my career who have helped me and educate me on how this business works. I save my money and put it way.

Look at Evander Holyfield. The man made huge money and now there's talk his house is up for foreclosure. I think we're talking around 170 million f___ing dollars. How do you screw that up? That's insane! I don't want that happening to me, so I live a little below the way I could live.

I still enjoy some of that money. I used to ride around in a beat-up, white Chevy Blazer. Now I have a white 2008 Chevy Tahoe I got through a local car dealer. I like big vehicles. I always did. But with this economy, and the price of gas, it's unbelievable. The thing costs close to $90 to fill up with gas. I may have to rethink my taste in big trucks for now on (*laughs*).

The Ring: Has it been a struggle keeping the money from drastically changing your lifestyle?

KP: My daughter and everything that's going on in my life keeps it normal. My father, my mother, my family, they all help me keep my feet on the ground, so I don't mess up. Money to me is something that I can use to get by with something. I don't need money to prove myself. As long as I have enough money to scratch my ass, I'm okay. I don't need anything fancy. Golfing, doing and buying things for my daughter and my fiancée, that makes me happy. Plus, I have two dogs that I spoil, but they piss me off when they fight. They're good dogs; they have a good time. But I'm a fighter who hates it when my dogs fight. The Greyhound shepherd is five years old and the Golden Retriever is five months old, so it's like I have three kids. I don't go out that much. Not as much as I used to. I try to keep it tame.

The Ring: Your strong connection to your hometown of Youngstown is well documented. But you take it a step further and train in Youngstown for big fights, while most world champions of your caliber usually go away to training camp to avoid any kind of unwarranted hassles. Why do you choose to stay and train at home?

KP: I trained in Vegas earlier in my career and I was traveling a half-hour away just to run. To lift weights at a gym cost me $2,500 a month to have access to the place. In Youngstown, you have the YMCA five minutes away from my house; three parks to run in are two minutes away; my gym is five minutes away. Everything is within two-to-five miles within each other. I can run to them, if I wanted. I don't have to travel to all these places to train. I can run through the parks and I'm in a comfort zone. I can see my family and at the same time keep my head and do what I have to do.

To some fighters, it could be distracting. It's not for me. I keep focused, keep myself straight and clean, and I'm fine. Preparation for me is a big thing. I have a good and strong team around me, with everyone handling certain responsibilities. And there is Youngstown, which could be good, and it is 99.9 percent of the time, but in some cases, in some rare cases, it could be bad.

The Ring: What do you mean by that?

KP: I found when you reach a certain level of success, you're going to deal with people, envious people, and you'll see things on the Internet about me that's a bunch of s___ that rips me. You have people in Youngstown who hate the fact that I'm a success. Why, I

don't know. There is a side of Youngstown that hates me; just read the *Youngstown Vindicator*, go on to some of the message boards there, and you'll see stuff on there that rips me. It happens. I take in stride.

Youngstown shows me love. Overall, the fan support that I do have, it's unbelievable. I have enough people who follow me that are great. But what's the saying? Misery loves company. That's for the haters. There are a lot more people who love what I'm doing and are happy for the success that I have. In Youngstown, the good far outweighs the bad. But it's not all good. There is some bad.

The Ring: Did the incident outside the Shenanigan's bar, in December 2005, where you received a misdemeanor assault charge, have anything to do with that?

KP: I think it did. I play in a traveling dart league, going from bar-to-bar. I still do. But one night we're in this Shenanigan's, which by the way sucks (*laughs*), playing darts with some buddies and arguing about Ohio State and Notre Dame. Before you know it, this guy grabs me from behind and tells me to leave. I put my hands up and went outside. I kept asking them what I did wrong, and then someone pepper-sprayed me. I couldn't see anything and the first person I grabbed, I noticed through all the water in my eyes, had a badge on his chest. *Uh-oh*, I was in some trouble. I was loud about a football game. I sucked it up, but I think some people there had something against me. I didn't punch anybody, like it was reported. I just grabbed the guy.

MP: Kelly wanted to know why he was thrown out of the bar. Kelly was pepper-sprayed—and it was unfortunate. That hurt Kelly for a time. He got a bad reputation because of that. He was devastated. He was a young kid, 23 when it happened. He didn't want Top Rank to think he was a hooligan. Young kids are young kids. They all get into scrapes. He survived it.

Ring: We spoke often in the past about respect. Do you think you've finally achieved that among boxing people, or is it still something you're searching for?

KP: I think I finally achieved it, but I took a long, hard road to the championship. I still think I have to prove things to people. I still think there is a lot more work to be done, even after I beat [Edison] Miranda and Jermain Taylor twice—beat them all. I took the Lockett fight because he's the number-one WBO mandatory. That was anoth-

PHOTO BY GARY SARTI/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Loew and Pavlik work the pads at Loew's Southside Boxing Club, which is only five minutes away from the champ's Youngstown, Ohio, house. Pavlik tried training in Las Vegas, but found it inconvenient and expensive, and prefers to prep for his fights in his hometown.

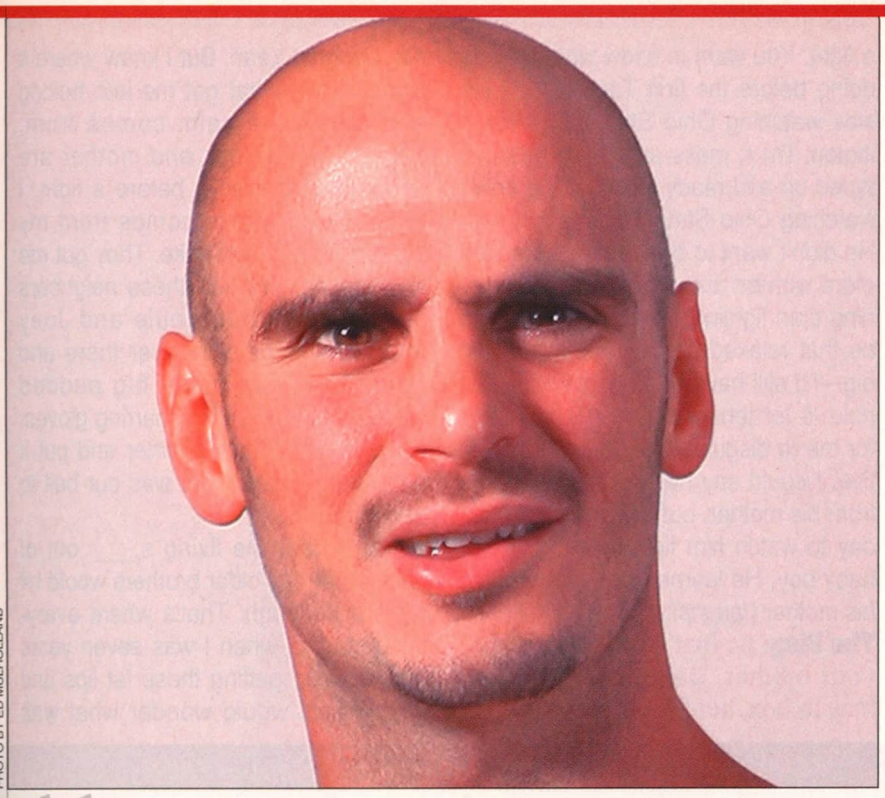


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

"I found when you reach a certain level of success, you're going to deal with people, envious people, and you'll see things on the Internet about me that's a bunch of s___ that rips me. You have people in Youngstown who hate the fact that I'm a success. Why, I don't know."

er time I still felt I had something to prove, because people expect me to face a killer every time.

I walked into a situation like I'm the victim of my own success. I fought guys like Miranda and Taylor, and people forget. I had Jose Zertuche, who's a good fighter too, before Miranda and Taylor, and that's four tough fights in a row. People expect you to fight those high-caliber guys all of the time. That's physically impossible to do.

I see the end of the tunnel. Boxing is not a longevity sport. I'm not risking my long-term health. I have a daughter who's two. I'm only 26 years old and I already have arthritis in both of my hands. I want to play with my daughter and have a good time when I'm older. I want to accomplish what I can and then retire. After I had my daughter, I started to think of those things.

Ring: Has your two-year-old daughter, Sydney, changed your life?

KP: Definitely. Any good father, husband, fiancée, if you have a kid and you love your woman, and you're not a scumbag, it does change your life. You live for them. My father used to get on my ass when I'd put him through all kinds of stuff. He'd always tell me wait until I have my own kids. Now I have, and my father gets smarter and smarter each day. He'd say things like my time will come, and everything my parents used to tell me as a kid now is gospel. I have great parents. They've guided me through all of this.

Ring: Being around you and your team, it seems you have a great relationship with your father. It's like a true father-son team that's morphed into two drinking buddies.

KP: (*laughs*) You can say that. I have the best parents anyone could ever have. I remember as a kid my father would buy us spikes to play sports, while the soles of his own shoes were falling off. My parents always made sure my older brothers, Ricky and Mike, and me were set and always taken care of, whether it was pizza every Friday night or making sure the icebox was filled with popsicles. They went through a lot of sacrifices to make sure we had everything we wanted. I just have this image of the soles of my father's shoes just hanging off. That will always stay with me. So I promised myself that when I started making some real money doing this, I'd take care of my father. It led to some arguments, because my father didn't want anything from me. But after the Miranda fight, I told Cameron Dunkin, my manager, that my father has to get paid. The thing is, he hasn't spent a cent of all the money I've given him. My parents still live in an 800-square-foot house that's as big as a garage. I had to threaten my mother that I'd stab her in the back with a scraper to get a new counter put in the kitchen (*laughs*). They want nothing from me.

Ring: What keeps the relationship strong?

KP: You get fathers who are trainers, and that could lead to some things. My dad and me are not trainer-fighter, so it works. We do get heated, but it becomes worse when your father is the trainer. My father's main job is to make sure everything goes smoothly. He does things like making sure everyone gets their tickets and all the little things are done. But he drives me up a wall before fights. He turns whiter than me. He worries. And we'll always have at least one fight before I get into the ring. It's like we have to. We're the same exact blood, that Slovakian-Sicilian mix, and we think the same exact way. I can't remember us not having a fight before a fight. He becomes a nervous wreck; it's almost like he's getting in the ring. Not me. That worries me. But we have to fight. We have to nitpick at each other. It is like a ritual.

MP: I purposely pick fights with Kelly before every fight (*laughs*), just to get

him pissed off. Sometimes it's legitimate, but most of the time, I make it up to keep him on his toes. I don't want him to be too relaxed. I have to do something to drum him up once in a while. This time before the Lockett fight, it was a good one. I got him going. He got riled and he took it out on poor Lockett. It was all part of the plan. Lockett was in a world of trouble before he even stepped into the ring.

Every team has their problems. We don't have a large entourage, and we've known each other for many, many years. We try to stay close to each other. But we all joke around with each other. No one is safe. Everyone gets cut.

I'll say this, in eight years Kelly has been a pro, he scares the hell out of me how unbelievably calm he is before a fight. You want to know what he was doing before the first Taylor fight? He was watching Ohio State play Washington. I'm a mess and there he is all taped up and ready to go, sitting down watching Ohio State and Washington. He didn't want to be bothered. He was more worried about the Buckeyes winning than fighting Taylor. I wish I could be that relaxed before something that big—I'd still have hair (*laughs*). I'm terrible, a lot tenser than he is. It's hard for me to disguise it. He's just so positive. I could say he gets his calmness from his mother, but she refuses to this day to watch him fight live. That's her baby boy. He learned how to box from his mother (*laughs*).

The Ring: So that's the great secret, your mother, Debby, showed you how to box, huh?

KP: (*laughs*) Yeah. But I know where it comes from, what got me into boxing and where the calm comes from, because my father *and* mother are both nervous wrecks before a fight. I think my calmness comes from my brothers, Ricky and Mike. They got me into fighting. We had these neighbors across the street, Louie and Joey Alessio, and we'd go over there and fight. They had these big padded gloves that looked like sparring gloves. We'd get this cooking timer and put it on three minutes. That was our bell to end rounds.

We'd beat the living s___ out of each other. My older brothers would hit me hard enough. That's where everything started, when I was seven years old. I'd keep getting these fat lips and my parents would wonder what was

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pavlik has a very calm demeanor prior to fights. He made easy work of alphabet mandatory Gary Lockett, who couldn't withstand Pavlik's punching power or pressure. The Ghost finished off the Welshman in three.

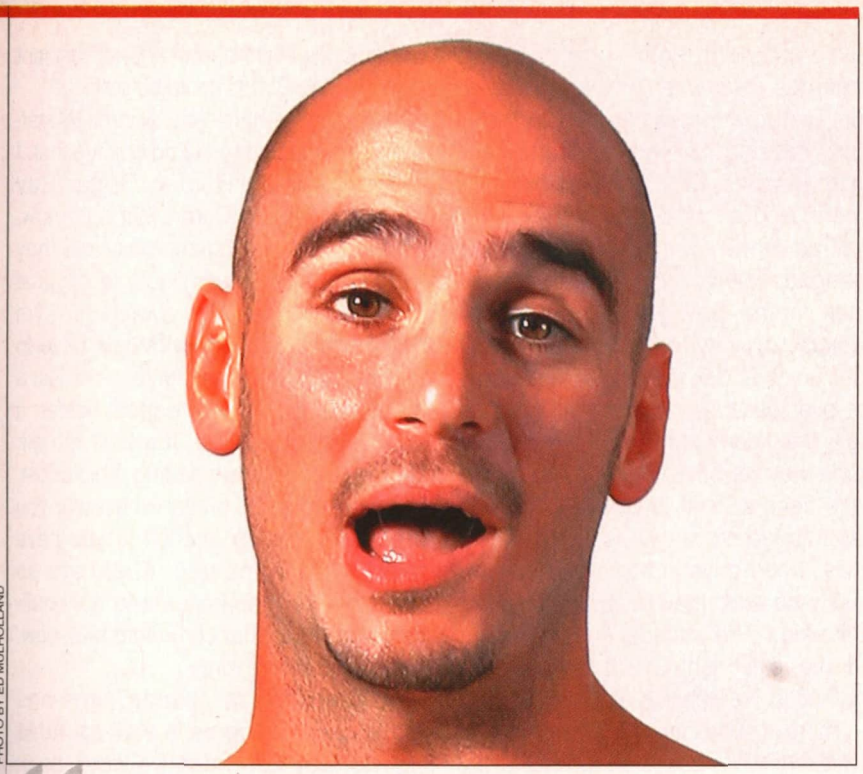


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

"People thought I'd get my ass kicked by Jermain Taylor in the first fight. I'm the white guy, right? White guys can't fight, right? I got past the white guy thing when I knocked Taylor out."

happening. I told them five days in a row I fell from my bike. There are only so many times you can fall off your bike (*laughs*). My mom and dad were out there turning that bike upside down to find out what was wrong with it. They figured it out, because everyone on the block was fighting. It was like a kid's fight club. It was fun. It's what we did. I grew up in a situation where we had boxing with cooking timers and blacktop tackle football. There were video games available, but I was always outside doing something.

Ring: Do you still think you fall under a certain scrutiny as a "white" champion?

KP: That's a great question. I'm happy you asked that question. The racial thing I get all of the time. I still do. It pisses me off that white athletes are categorized as not good. White athletes in this day and age are supposed to be slow and non-athletic and I think we get these shots taken at us because we're white. But look at the facts: Three of the last four MVPs in the NBA are white, Steve Nash [twice] and Dirk Nowitzki. Look at boxing right now, with the European and British fighters. They're the dominant fighters in boxing today.

It's funny how the whole sport has changed. Whites now are the dominant race in boxing. I'm not saying that's good, but it is fact. I feel that whites are the discriminated race in the sport. I am a white champion at middleweight, and look at the other two guys at middleweight with belts, Arthur Abraham and Felix Sturm. We're all white. White fighters, Joe Calzaghe, Mikkel Kessler, Sturm, Wladimir Klitschko, and Abraham dominate boxing.

The Ring: Has it translated into how people thought some of your fights would turn out?

KP: I think it has. People thought I'd get my ass kicked by Jermain Taylor in the first fight. I'm the white guy, right? White

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guys can't fight, right? I got past the white guy thing when I knocked Taylor out. That to me said that people better start realizing that white athletes are good at sports. Black athletes put their time in and became great. They were making money and now times have changed. Some black athletes I know back in the day got screwed over because they were black. That wasn't right, so don't look at me or try and screw me over *because I'm white*. All I'm saying is that I don't want to be looked at the same way as other white fighters may have been viewed in the past. No one has handed me anything because I'm white. I had guys in the amateurs purposely go after me because I was "the white kid." The attitude was, the white kid, me, can't fight. That's what I mean by I had to live with that all my life.

There is still a lot of stupidity out there. Not every white guy is smart. Not every black guy is dumb. People are people. Look at today, the middleweight world champion is white and the next President of the United States could be black. People have a hard time accepting that, white and black. I really do believe that. I respect Marvin Hagler, Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, but right now, boxing has white champions, and they have to be respected. It's no longer that I am here because I'm a white guy. I'm here because I'm good. People have to realize that I'm a great fighter—not just a great white fighter, but a great fighter. It is a reverse prejudice. It pisses me off. Boxing is once again getting a big boost, because it doesn't matter what color you are, purple, green, orange, if you have talent, they'll find you. There are so many different countries and nationalities, and races that come into play now. That's good for boxing.

The Ring: You're gaining more and more acceptance as a well-rounded fighter, but that hasn't always been the case, has it?

KP: Not at all. I can punch. That's it

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pavlik thinks he arrived as a legitimate threat to the middleweight championship after he stopped Jose Zertuche in the eighth round, in January 2007. Kelly's father, Mike, disagrees and says thoughts of his son becoming world champion started to spring up in his mind two years earlier.

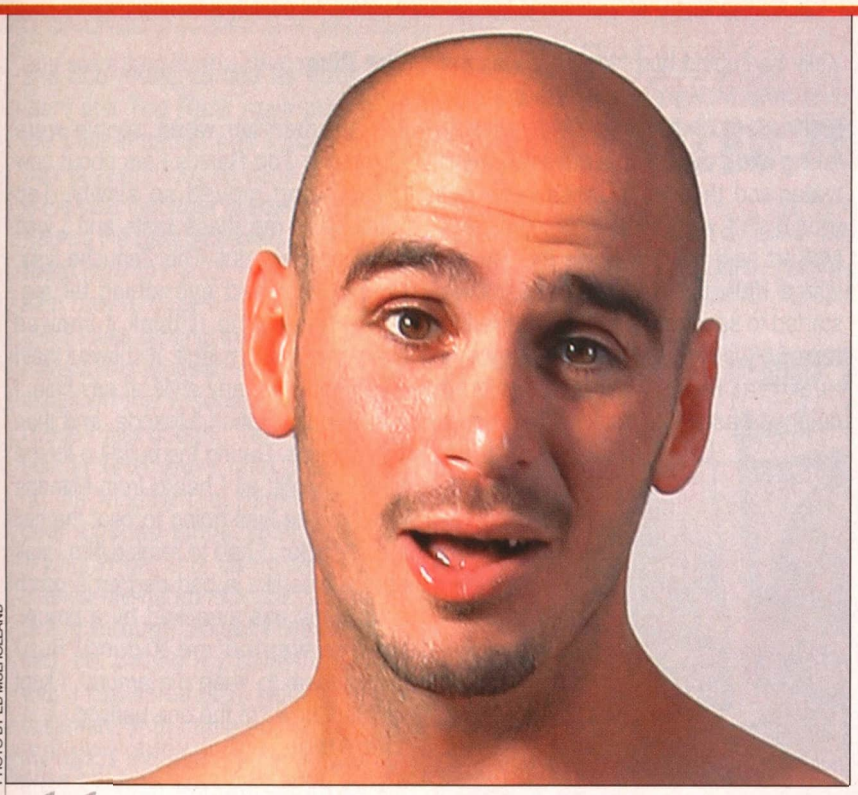

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

"That's all I ever heard. That's how people look at me: As one-dimensional. I can't do anything else. Then I'm the best one-dimensional fighter ever. If I am one-dimensional, why can't anyone stop me?"

(*laughs*). That's all I can do—punch. I'm one-dimensional. That's all I ever heard. That's how people look at me: as one-dimensional. I can't do anything else. Then I'm the best one-dimensional fighter ever. If I am one-dimensional, why can't anyone stop me? I live with it. I say go ahead and talk it. You don't get this far by being one-dimensional. I love it. I can jab someone to death. The two Taylor fights all I heard was how slow my hands were. It frustrates me. If I'm that slow, how can I hit anyone? If I'm that slow, how can I even connect with one punch?

The Ring: The funny thing is that you were considered a boxer coming up as an amateur, someone who had fast hands and didn't have much of a punch. Where did your power come from?

KP: It came all of a sudden, out of nowhere. I was around 17 years old at this junior national tournament and I was dropping everybody. I got home and I was dropping everybody in the gym. It was almost like something that had happened overnight. I was hitting the pads and, holy s___, I think it was physical maturity that took over. The leverage on my punches was the same, everything was the same. I just started knocking guys out. Everything just started happening. When you stop everyone, it does catch you by surprise.

MP: It caught me by surprise. I remember Kelly coming up in the amateurs. He was a very slick boxer. I remember telling Jack Loew, his trainer, when Kelly was around 15, 16 years old, that Kelly didn't have much power—how far can we go with this?

It's like this. Every father who takes his kid in the backyard with a football envisions his son playing in the Super Bowl. But when Kelly was coming up through the amateurs, and even early as a pro, I always wondered where this would go. I'll be honest, I never saw

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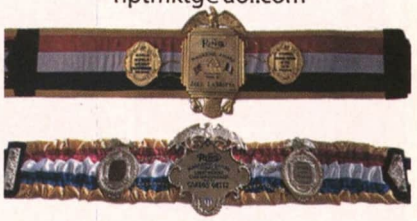

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Kelly's success reaching this level. I never did, not really.

The Ring: What changed it for you, Mike?

MP: When Kelly took apart [Fulgencio] Zuniga. That was the turnaround for me right there. I started to think that Kelly could really go on to win a belt. Then we had Bronco McKart, right after we beat Zuniga, and McKart was a two-time titlist who was never down. He didn't think anything Kelly had could hurt him. That was the first time McKart kissed the canvas. McKart said he was the old raccoon taking the young dog out to the deep water and then he'd drown him—but that didn't work out. The next day, McKart said to Jack Loew that everywhere Kelly hit him, it hurt. I think we started to see there that Kelly started to turn 360 degrees. But we'd always hear that Kelly's hand speed and defense wasn't that great.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

The Ring world championship belt is very important to Pavlik, who's grown a little miffed at the alphabet organizations over the exorbitant sanctioning fees. Pavlik, who plans on fighting maybe three more years, feels fighters are given little respect from the sanctioning bodies.

The Ring: What changed it for you, Kelly?

KP: I remember when people were chirping in Top Rank's ears about how I was being moved so slowly. Top Rank gave me these tests and I was knocking guys out. The Zertuche fight, I think, changed everything for me. That showed me, I think it showed everyone, that I'm legit. It showed that I could deal with any style at any time. I had Zertuche, then Miranda, and then Taylor twice. During the build-up for the Miranda fight, all I heard from Miranda was how he was going to beat the hell out of Taylor. I had to remind him I was here. I was like a bad dog on a porch getting my ass smacked by a broom. No one wanted me around. But I forced them to keep me around. I kept winning; now I'm the one barking.

The Ring: What's your feeling on all the belts you have and the sanctioning fees you pay for them?

KP: I understand what goes on. Having those other belts helps you get paid. The Ring belt is very important to me and it's legit and it has history attached to it. Hagler wore it, Sugar Ray Robinson wore it. You don't have to tell me. You get *that* belt, you're the cream of the crop. What pisses me off is that the alphabets can strip you if you don't do what they want. It's the way it is. That I accept. What I can't accept from the organizations is the little respect they have for the fighters. We're like the guinea pigs to the alphabets, but it's a choice we all made as fighters getting in the ring.

The sanctioning fees should be a little cheaper. I had to pay $50,000 for the Lockett fight, between the WBO and WBC. I've paid $20,000, $15,000 for a $1,000 belt. Where do they get the balls to charge me for that? It's nice leather and all, and I can see if it's real gold. But it isn't. It's fake gold on those belts. I'd give the belts up to ease up on the sanctioning fees. These organizations are raking these guys. The fighter is the horse and everyone is the jockey riding him.

The Ring: Are your happy with your career as it stands today?

KP: Yes, I have to be. Cameron Dunkin

and Bob Arum, as bad as boxing is, them and Top Rank have put me in the best situation and I can't argue with anything they've done. Cameron is the best manager in boxing and Top Rank is the best promoter.

Ring: How are your hands?

KP: They're okay now. The day I cut them I was getting free windows and I was trying to clean up the bugs and things on the windowsill of this new house I just bought. This house was built in 1954 and I tried pushing up on the window that might not have been opened since 1954 (*laughs*). Trying to get this damn thing up, I pushed my hands through the glass. Going through actually wasn't that bad, but pulling my hands back out was. I had some guys working in the basement at the time and when I got my hands through the glass, you figured I'd seen enough blood in the ring, right? I yelled and screamed about my hands (*laughs*). There was blood all over the place and they were wrapping both of my hands. At the time, I'll admit, I was sacred. But it's really had no effect. It was a little blown out of proportion in the media, in my opinion, but I found out how famous I was. I only had five stitches on each hand, 10 total. But my hands are completely healed today.

Ring: How much longer do you see yourself boxing?

KP: I see myself doing this maybe another three years—and four more fights. That's it. I'm waking up in the morning and I feel my back and legs now. They ache when I roll out of bed. The training camps take their toll on your body. The fights do too. It doesn't matter if it's after fighting Gary Lockett or Jermain Taylor. I want to get out of boxing healthy and safe. I want to be able to teach my daughter how to golf one day. I think I'll be able to walk away with no regrets, but I don't think I'll be able to walk away from the sport though. I'll always been involved with boxing in some capacity. I've already invested my money well and thinking about ownership in some businesses. Who knows? But so far, I'm enjoying this ride. ■

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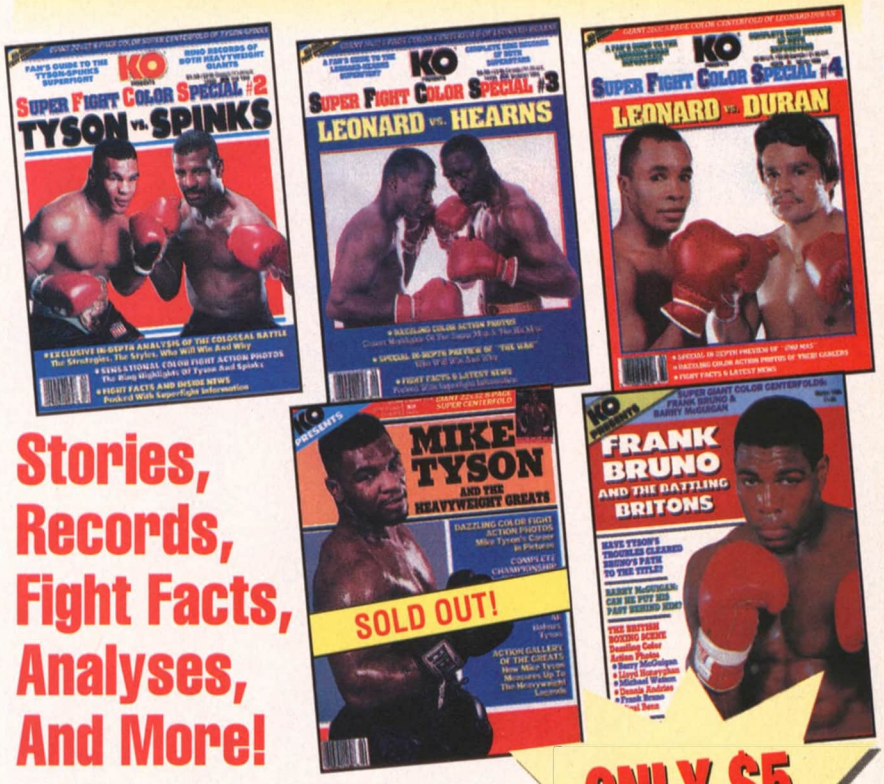

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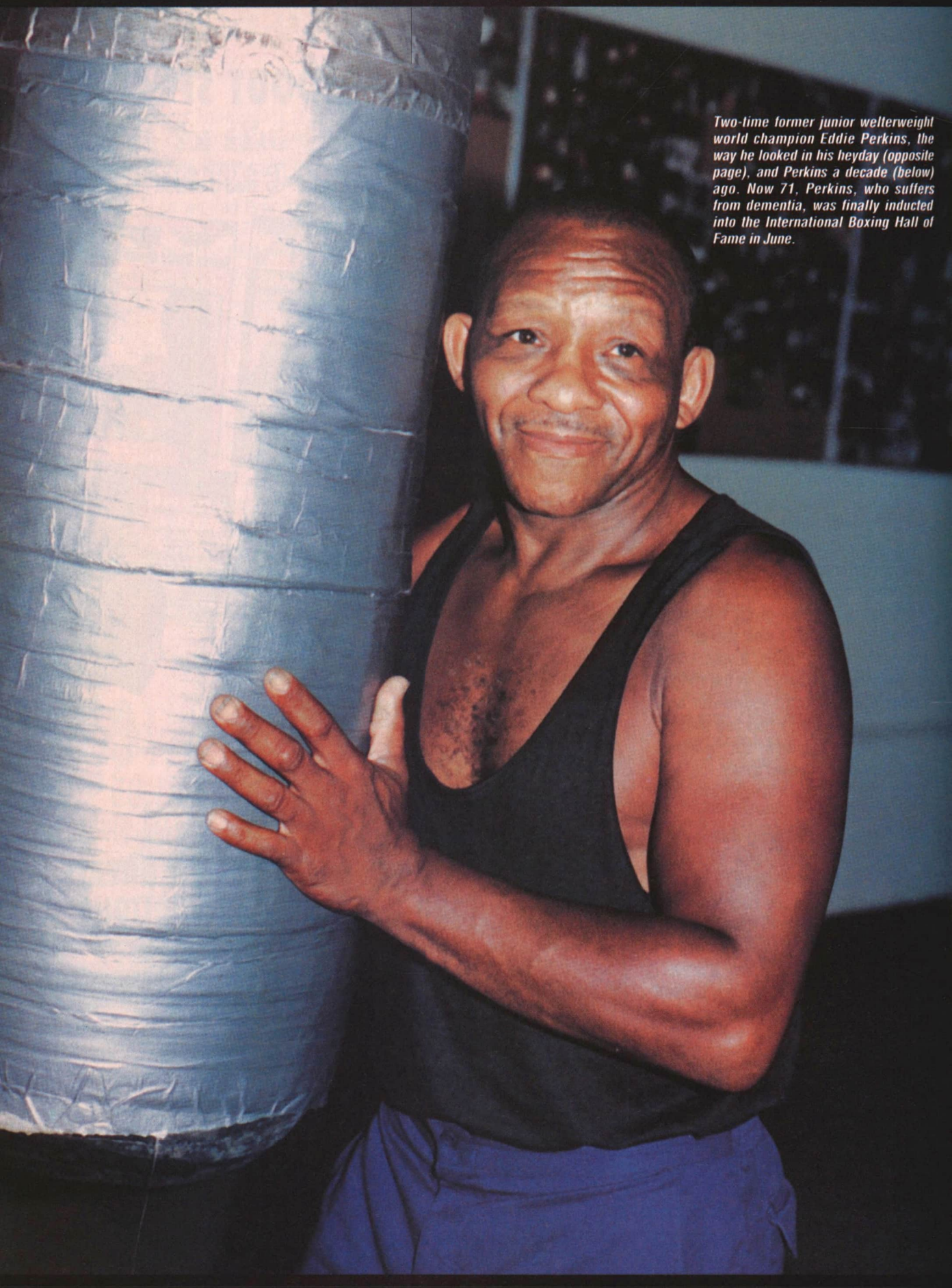


Two-time former junior welterweight world champion Eddie Perkins, the way he looked in his heyday (opposite page), and Perkins a decade (below) ago. Now 71, Perkins, who suffers from dementia, was finally inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June.

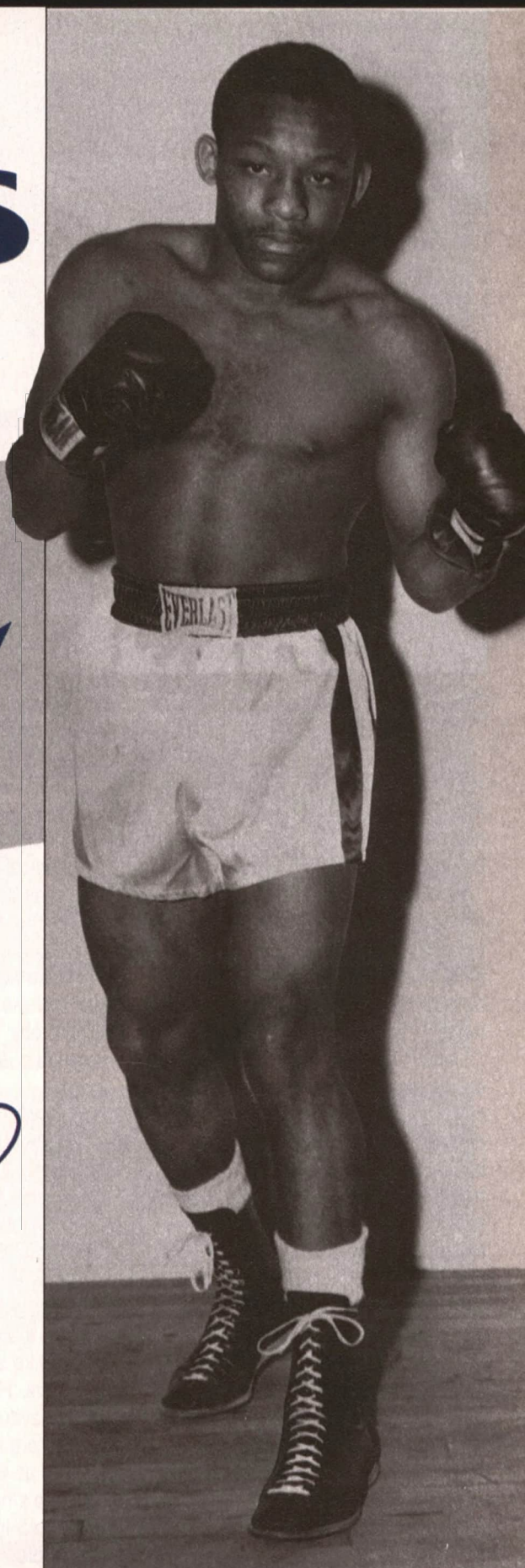
EDDIE PERKINS FINALLY GETS HIS HALL CALL

"It's So Far Overdue, It's A Crime"

By Don Stewart

Annie Perkins' voice radiates through the line. It's soft and sweet, like that of a kindly old grandmother. But there's also a layer of strength just beneath the surface, a sure sign that she is, after all, the wife of a fighter.

Annie has been asked about her husband of 50 years, former junior welterweight champion Eddie Perkins. Asked if she's disappointed that it's taken this long for Eddie to get elected to the



Perkins traveled the world because that was the only way a "junior" champion could make a decent living. Here, he's in Caracas, Venezuela, with probably the only two people in the country who wanted to see him win: his wife, Annie, and trainer Johnny Coulon, the former bantamweight champ.

International Boxing Hall of Fame. Asked if she's angry that he should have been honored at Canastota before the dementia began to set in.

"No, no," Annie says, in that always pleasant tone. "We were just glad it did happen. We weren't upset about anything like that. We're all just glad that he got his recognition. Better late than never."

Now 71, Eddie has a tough time recalling his long career due to his mental condition. Annie says they don't talk much about his fighting days. And what brilliant days they were. Perkins' final record of 75-20-2 (22) with 2 no-contests, is hardly a reflection of what the lifelong Chicago resident accomplished in the ring.

Short but slick, Perkins was as tough to hit as those evil agents in *The Matrix* movies. He fought six world champs, including Hall of Famers Jose Napoles, Nicolino Locche, and Duilio Loi. Forced to tackle most of his significant bouts outside the United States, Perkins was the victim of several hometown verdicts. On the flip side, the fact that he took so many decisions in the backyards of his opponents only speaks to his superior talent.

Perkins was a master of a traditional, classical style initially picked up in the gyms of Chicago, then perfected under the tutelage of former bantamweight champ Johnny Coulon. He was intelligent, beautiful, smooth. Shuffled the feet rather than bounced on his toes. Was excellent at parrying punches and positioning himself for the counter.

"He was a classic counterpuncher," boxing historian Mike Silver said. "But everything worked off that jab. He could outbox the boxers, and he could outsmart the sluggers. He was rarely hit with a solid punch."

"He was such a great fighter," said Chicago fight game veteran Jack Cowen. "I saw him so many times. He looked like a heavyweight, real broad shoulders. He was one helluva fighter, and an awfully nice guy. A lot of fighters that are in the Hall of Fame are not as good as Eddie Perkins."

There's no outrage from the Perkins household in southwest Chicago over "Big Eddie," as Annie calls him, being overlooked by the Hall of Fame voters for so long. There seems to be enough angst among historians and veteran observers to make up for it.

Perkins and fellow 2008 inductee Holman Williams are among a select group of black fighters who have been passed over for years, according to longtime fight promoter J Russell Peltz, a 2004 inductee. Others in that class include light heavyweights Lloyd Marshall and Tiger Jack Fox, who have yet to get the nod. Of the four mentioned, only Perkins is still alive.

"It's so far overdue, it's a crime," Peltz said of Perkins' late induction. "I got so pumped up when he got inducted because I've been pushing him for years. It's just a shame he couldn't have gotten in five years ago, when he was a little more coherent."

Silver calls Perkins one of his all-time favorites. He first watched Perkins fight in May of 1960, when he outpointed Paolo Rosi on the old *Wednesday Night Fights* series. At the time, Silver was training as an amateur in New York.

"When I watched the fights, I would see how these guys would move,"

Silver said. "Perkins was one of the fighters I watched who executed the same classic moves that I was being taught in Stillman's Gym at the time. He was one of the fighters you could actually learn from by watching on television. He was beautiful to watch, a boxing purist's delight. He fought like a miniature Harold Johnson."

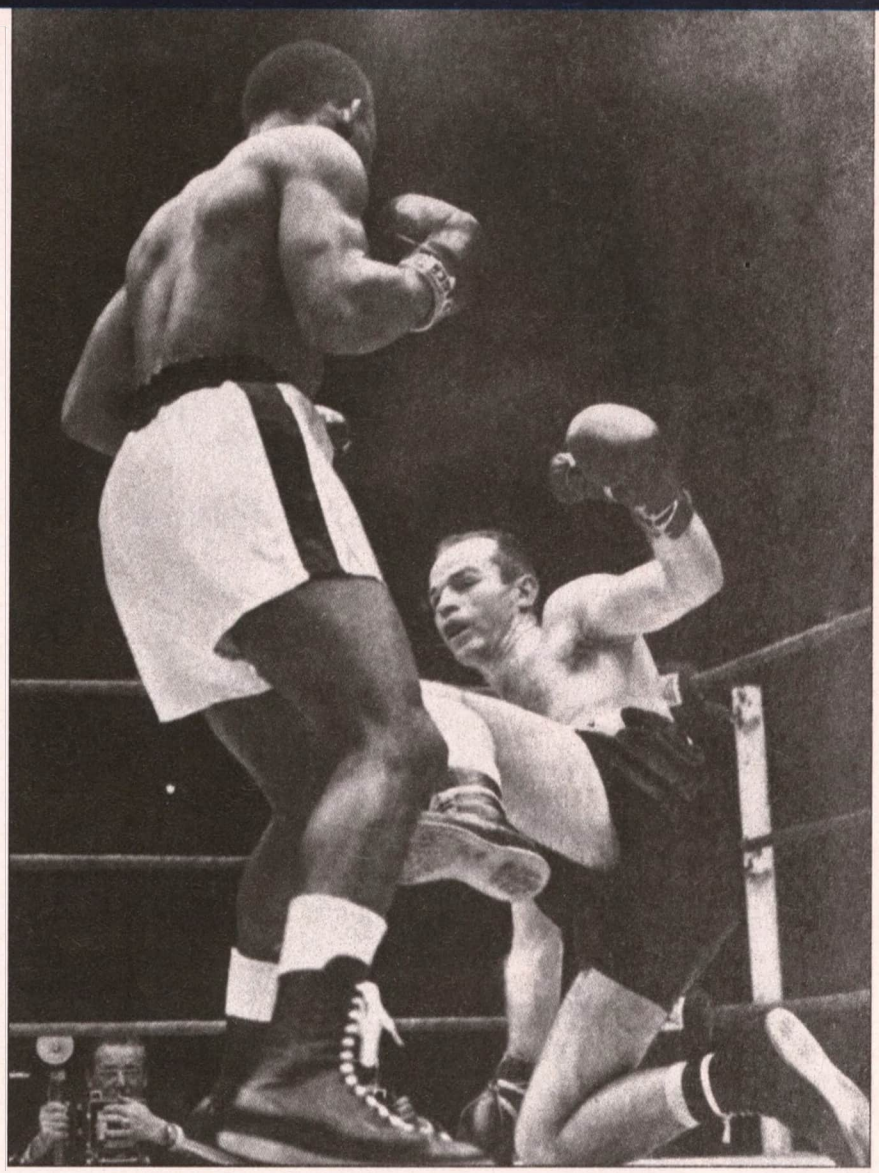
Silver is gratified that Perkins is being recognized, but feels strongly that today's fans and commentators don't fully appreciate or understand the quality of the many other fine champions and contenders of the past decades. He addresses this subject in his forthcoming book *The Arc Of Boxing: The Rise And Decline Of The Sweet Science*, which will be available this fall.

Like just about everything else, boxing has evolved, for better or worse, quite a bit in the last 40 years. During Perkins' prime, there were only 11 weight classes and 11 champions, fighters tended to be more active, and fans identified more with names than with the won-loss records next to them. Peltz joked that the only similarity between now and Perkins' era is they still wear gloves.

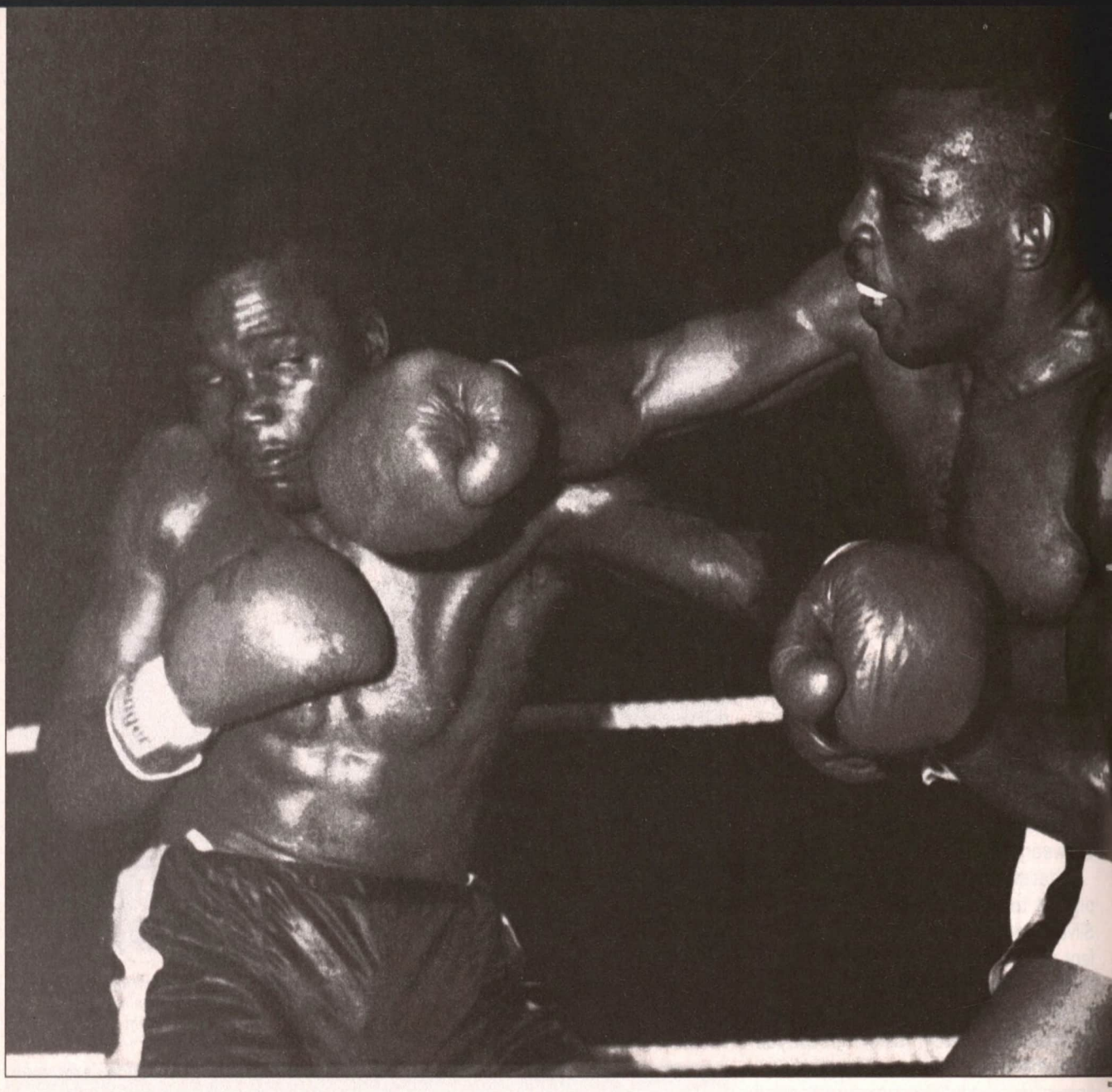
"Statistically, too much emphasis is placed today on wins and losses," Silver added. "The problem today is the fans who are younger will look at Eddie Perkins' record and say, 'This guy lost 20 times.' A loss wasn't perceived the same way it is today; it didn't throw you back the way it does today. It didn't knock you out of the box like it does today, when everybody has to remain undefeated."

It's also tough for fans and observers to pull up the record of an old champ such as Perkins on the Internet and truly appreciate the context of many of his wins. Perkins outpointed the likes of Loi, Frankie Ryff, Armando Muniz, Kenny Lane, Clyde Gray, and Angel Espada, but those names tend to mean little to someone born well after all those guys were retired.

It's like that memorable scene in the final episode of the *John Adams* HBO miniseries where the aging former President, after being shown a portrait



Perkins built up a solid record as a lightweight early in his career, going through formidable opponents like Frankie Ryff (above) in a campaign to fight lightweight world champion Joe Brown (below) But after a few years of waiting, Perkins never got the chance to fight Brown, forcing Perkins to junior welterweight, where he twice won the world title.



dramatizing the signing of the Declaration of Independence, says that the history of the revolution is lost.

It doesn't help that Perkins and many of his junior welterweight contemporaries were overlooked even in their day. Perkins never fought in New York, and only a handful of his bouts were televised, including his 1959 win against Gene Gresham that closed out the *Wednesday Night Fights* series.

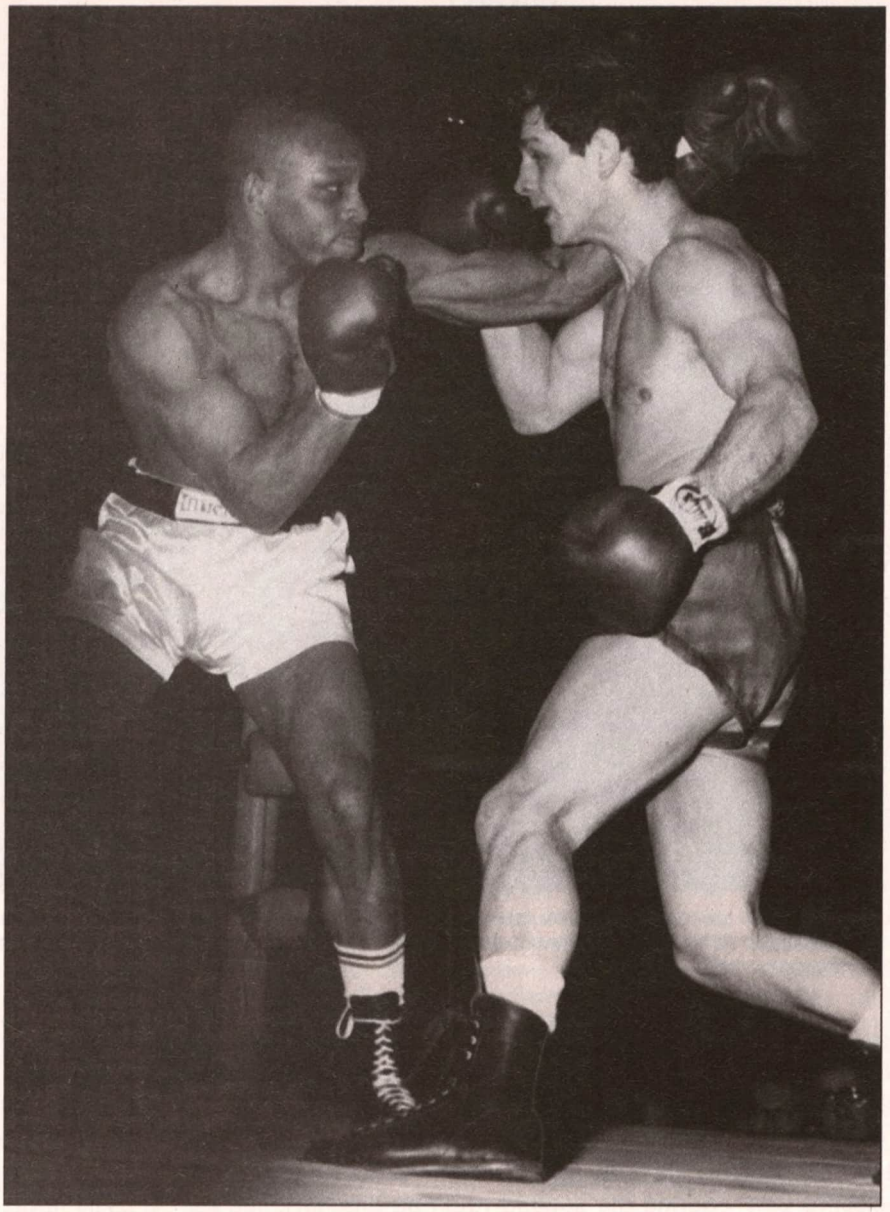
Though his color and style were factors, Perkins' biggest hurdle was his own weight. The 140-pound class, as well as junior middleweight and junior lightweight, was considered a novelty in the United States during his two stints as champion.

The Boxing Blade magazine invented the division in 1922 as a marketing ploy, with its readers electing Pinky Mitchell as the first world champ. The junior welterweight division disappeared after Barney Ross vacated the title in 1935, reappeared after World War II when Tippy Larkin outpointed Willie Joyce for the championship in 1946, then faded away again for another decade.

In the United States, boxing writers tended to ignore the "junior" divisions, believing they were just gimmicks by promoters to create more titles (imagine that). "Nobody," Cowen said, "really cared about the junior welterweight divisions." But outside the country, the champions of these classes were major celebrities, and their title fights were often waged in sold out stadiums. So for Perkins, the only way to make any money was to go on the road.

"When you hear Bernard Hopkins say, 'I'll never go overseas,' it's because he's able to make the money here," Peltz said. "Eddie Perkins couldn't make that money here."

The 5'5" Perkins actually turned pro as a 135-pounder in 1956 at age 19



Perkins was not averse to fighting in another country, in an opponent's backyard. He became quite popular in other areas of the world, traveling to vanquish opponents like Johnny DePeiza (left) in Trinidad and Tobago, or Vic Andreetti (above) in London, England.

after going 26-10 as an amateur. Matched tough early in his career, Perkins developed into a highly ranked lightweight contender by the early-'60s.

Unable to get a shot at champ Joe Brown, he moved up to the lesser-regarded junior welterweight division. Perkins went to Milan, Italy, in 1961 and '62 for three title fights against Loi. He went 1-1-1. "He beat Duilio Loi in Italy," Peltz said. "Who does that? Whether you like his style or not, he's a Hall of Famer."

Perkins regained the championship in Manila in '63, outpointing Roberto Cruz. He successfully defended the title against Yoshinori Takahashi and Bunny Grant in their native Japan and Jamaica, respectively, in between five wins in non-title fights. Overall, Perkins fought in 22 different countries on six continents. As a result, he was a stranger in his native land. There are numerous stories of Perkins being treated like a celebrity abroad, only to be seen carrying his own bags through the airport after arriving quietly in Chicago with no reporters, photographers, or fans waiting to give him a hero's welcome.

For an article titled "A Champion Of The World—But A Stranger At Home," *Ebony* magazine once placed him at the corner of 63rd Street and Cottage Grove for 45 minutes to see if anyone would recognize him. No one did.

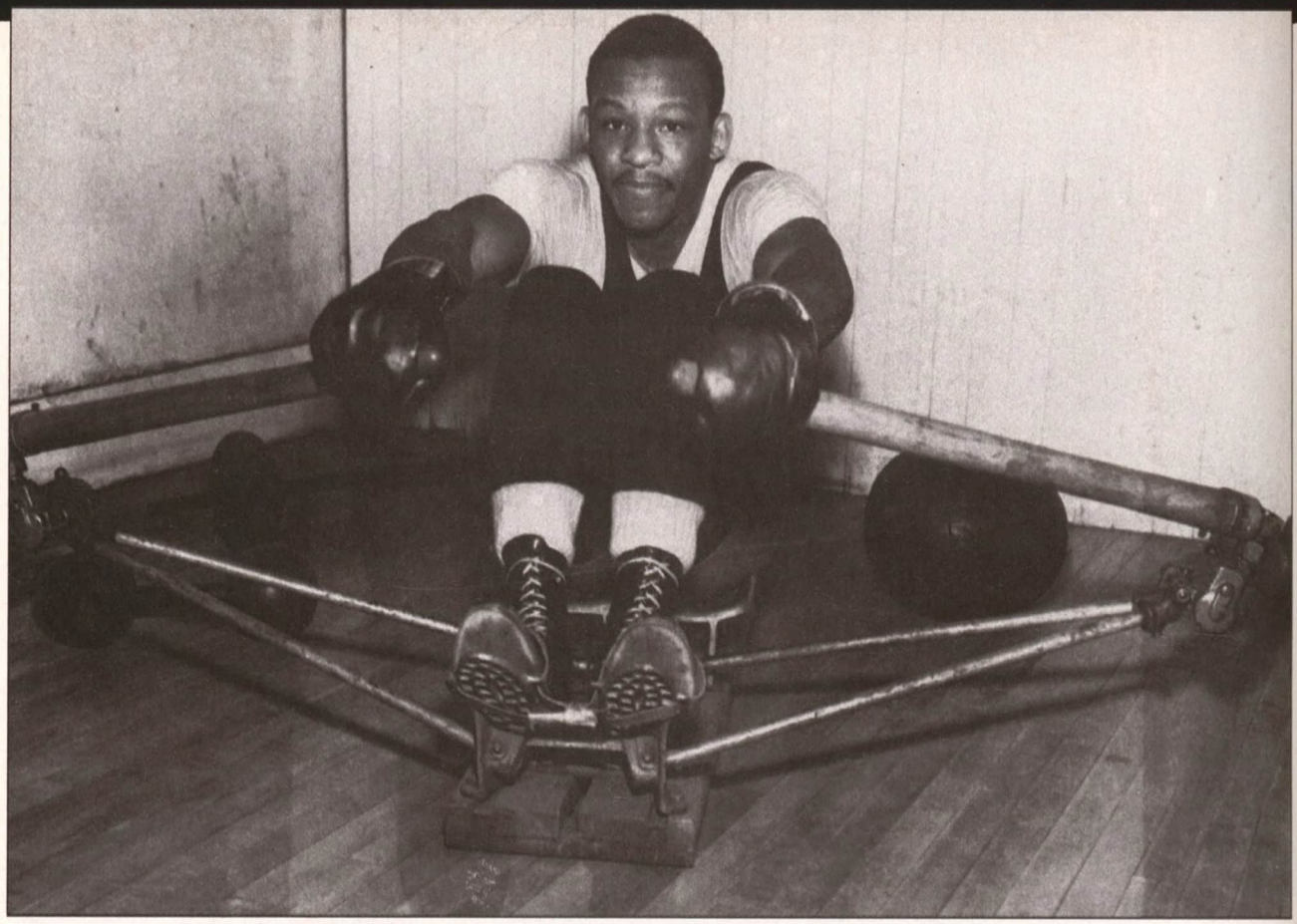
"I think they knew him better over there than they did here," Annie Perkins said. "He had to go over there to do most of his fighting. In his weight class, that's where everybody was at, so he did most of his fighting overseas. He'd go into somebody else's hometown and beat them, smiling the whole time."

The lack of recognition did pain her jovial husband at times, though. In a 1995 interview with THE RING's Pete Ehrmann, Perkins admitted he'd thought about moving to Italy. He said his family, which included Annie and their children, didn't want to go.

"I never had the cameras at the airport waiting to take my picture," Perkins said. "It didn't bother me at first, but later on it bothered me."

In January 1965, he went to Caracas, Venezuela, and lost his title on points in curious fashion to hometown hero Carlos Hernandez, whom he'd decisioned there four years earlier. The referee, legendary three-division former champ Henry Armstrong, had Perkins winning every round. The other two judges, both from Venezuela, had Hernandez ahead by one- and four-point margins. Armstrong later called it the worst case of partiality he'd seen in decades.

When asked, Perkins used to tell plenty of stories about rough breaks on the road. Among them was his only career stoppage loss, a seventh-round TKO at the hands of Alfredo Urbina in



Work ethic was never a problem for Perkins, just opportunity. After five years and 33 fights, Perkins finally got his first world title chance, fighting to a draw against defending junior welter champion Duilio Loi, in Lombardia, Italy, in October 1961. Perkins won the first of his two 140-pound world championships in the Loi rematch in September 1962, back in Italy.

1959. That fight was in Mexico, and it was stopped abruptly after Perkins suffered a cut over his eye due to a headbutt. "Every country I was ever in, I just kept my mouth shut," he said in an interview with cyberboxingzone.com's Dan Hanley in 2002. "Hey, I was the visitor."

It wasn't all bad, though. When he defended his title against Grant in Jamaica, the fight drew so much interest there that fans flocked to his outdoor training sessions, turned out en masse for the pre-fight weigh-in, and jammed Kingston's National Stadium.

Annie traveled with her husband for most of his bouts abroad. Her favorite destination was Jamaica, but Eddie was less particular. "Eddie liked anywhere he went," she said.

Perkins also fought five times in South Africa during the apartheid era. He went 4-1 there, with his sole loss coming to Maxwell Malinga in 1974, when Perkins was 37. He told Hanley in the 2002 interview that he never experienced any problems in what could have been very hostile territory. "I was always treated good," Perkins said. "I was like a celebrity in South Africa."

Perkins' top purses, which came during his second reign as champ, were in the $30,000-$40,000 range. Financially, he's not another sad boxing story. After hanging up the gloves in 1975, Perkins operated a newspaper distribution agency and paid off the mortgage on the house in which he still resides. Perkins also spent several years working with young fighters at St. Leo High School on the South Side of Chicago, something he gave up after his mental health began to decline. He and Annie continue to live comfortably.

"It's so long overdue," Peltz said of Perkins' induction. "It's a shame he has dementia. This is just the ignorance of the voters and a lot of the people on the voting committee. I don't want to rag on any of the people that are in the Hall of Fame, but he should have been in there so long ago, before so many of these guys."

It's a slight that's been corrected, albeit a bit late. Annie Perkins' husband might not be able to revel in the honor the way he could have, say, five years ago. Still, there's no outrage in that friendly, grandmotherly voice on the other end of the line.

"We're just so happy about it," she said. "Eddie, if he wasn't sick, he'd be around here trying to box everybody. Eddie has always been that kind of a guy. He's always had that big smile on his face. Everybody always liked him, and he liked everybody.

"He might be having a hard time now, but at one time it was all the energy you'd want to have in a boxer."

And there weren't many who ever boxed as brilliantly as Eddie Perkins. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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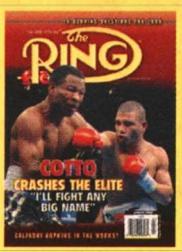

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- ☐ **Britain** (December 2007)
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[Summary]

Heavyweights
Dennis Bakhtov KO 10 Juho Haapoja
Taras Bidenko W 10 Michael Sprott
Danny Williams KO 7 Konstantin Airich
Bruce Seldon KO 5 Livin Castillo
Osborne Machimana KO 5 Miyan Solomons
Darrel Madison W 8 Zuri Lawrence
Cedric Boswell W 8 Zack Page
Jason Estrada KO 7 Moultrie Witherspoon

Cruiserweights
Dominic Vea W 12 Daniel Ammann
Herbie Hide W 12 Ehinomen Ehikhamenor
Rene Huebner W 10 Tino Froehlich
Sean Santana KO 5 Sebastiaan Rothmann
Jose Luis Herrera KO 5 Aaron Williams
Saul Farah KO 3 Manuel Solis Hurtado
Vyacheslav Uzelkov KO 3Denis Simcic
Alexander Alexeev KO 2 Louis Azille

Light Heavyweights
Daniel Bruwer KO 12 Anthony Van Niekerk
Tamas Popovics W 12 Shadrack Kipruto
Yusaf Mack W 10 Daniel Judah
Sven Haselhuhn W 10 Stan Johnson
Manny Siaca W 10 David Whittom

Super Middleweights
Anthony Mundine W 12 Sam Soliman
Jesse Brinkley W 12 Jason Naugler
Ever Bravo W 10 Jhon Berrio
Marco Rubio KO 5 Alfredo Cuevas

Middleweights
Kelly Pavlik KO 3 Gary Lockett
(*Retains World/WBC Titles*)
David Lopez W 10 Michael Walker
Mahir Oral W 12 Alexander Sipos
Peter Quillin W 10 Dionisio Miranda
Javier Maciel W 10 Leonel Murature
Willie Lee W 10 Clarence Taylor
Andy Kolle W 10 Jonathan Reid

Junior Middleweights
Sergio Mora W 12 Vernon Forrest
(*Wins WBC Title*)

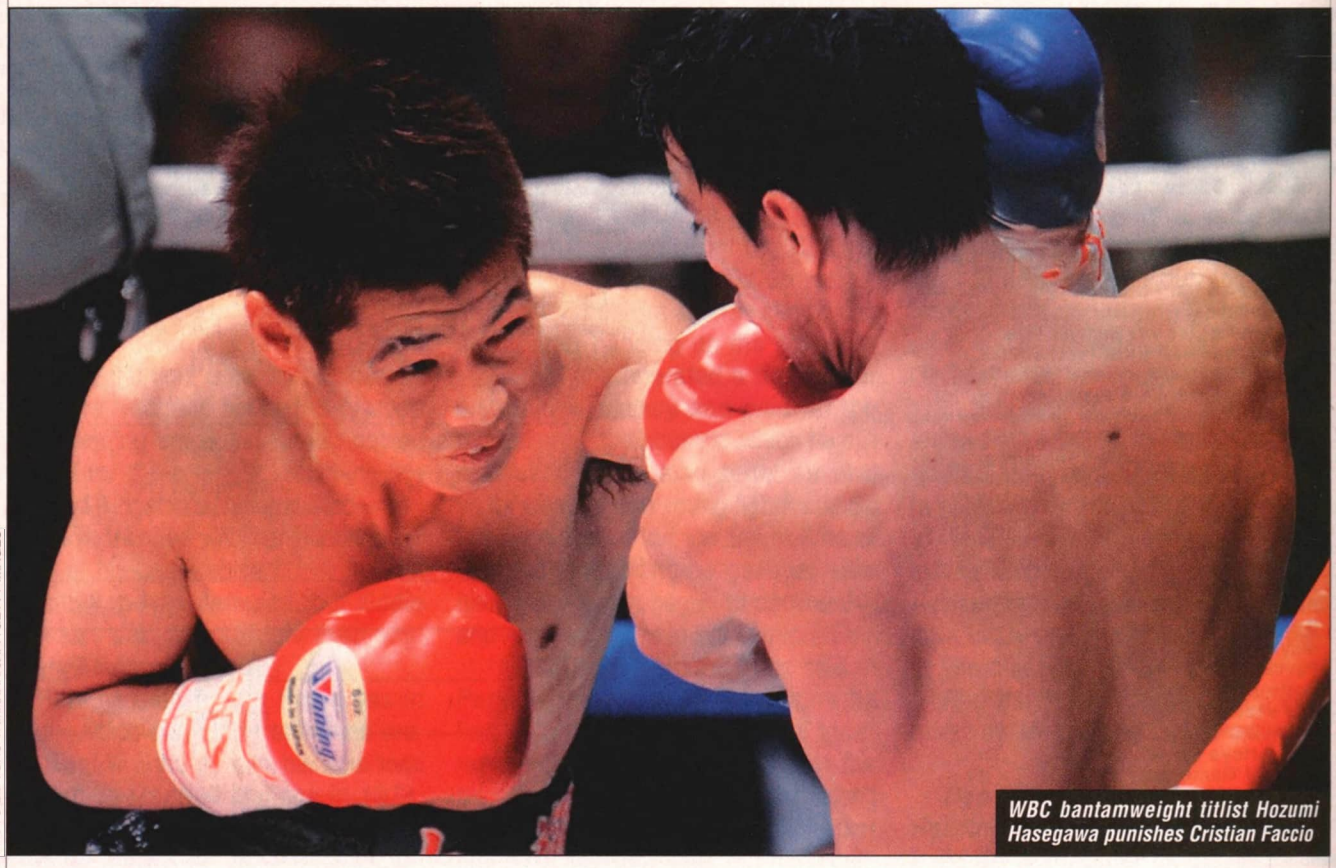

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

WBC bantamweight titlist Hozumi Hasegawa punishes Cristian Faccio

Sergio Martinez KO 7 Archak TerMeliksetian
Deandre Latimore KO 7 Sechew Powell
Andrew Facey D 10 Thomas McDonagh
Anthony Small KO 8 George Katsimpas
Taisei Marumoto KO 6 Lookton Jaytrong
Ivan Sanchez W 10 Juan Martinez Bas
Holly Holm W 10 Mary Jo Sanders

Welterweights

Paul Williams KO 1 Carlos Quintana
Charlie Navarro W 11 Jose Torres
Daniele Petrucci W 12 Neil Sinclair
Craig Watson W 12 Matthew Hatton
Jan Zaveck W 12 Marco Cattikas
Georges Dujardin W 10 Herve De Luca
Jorge Miranda Tech. Win 9 Oscar Medina
Jae-Hwan Kim KO 5 Kongthawat Sorkitti

Junior Welterweight

Ricky Hatton W 12 Juan Lazcano
(*Retains World Title*)
Paul Malignaggi W 12 Lovemore Ndou
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Herman Ngoudjo W 12 Souleymane M'baye
Patrick Lopez W 10 Juaquin Gallardo
Manolis Plaitis W 10 Bakary Sako
Graeme Higginson KO 10 Gary Reid
Cesar Bazan W 10 Juan Jesus Rivera
Rodrigo Juarez W 10 Sergio Soto

Lightweights

Edner Cherry KO 10 Stevie Johnston
Hoang Sang Nguyen W 12 Nico Salzmann
Hiroshige Osawa W 10 Tsuyoshi Takayama
Reyes Sanchez KO 10 Cesar Soriano
Jesus Gonzalez W 12 Cristian Lopez
Josafat Perez KO 8 Isaac Bejarano

Junior Lightweights

Edwin Valero KO 7 Takehiro Shimada
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Yodsanan Nanthachai KO 2 Rodel Orais
Simson Butar Butar W 12 Roberto Dalisay
Pedro Navarrete W 12 Arturo Gomez
Moses Seran KO 9 Leed Shabu
Roy Mukhlis W 12 Victor Manon
Monty Meza Clay KO 1 Fernando Lizarraga
Roy Mukhlis W 12 Victor Manon

Featherweights

Guty Espadas Jr. KO 2 Naoki Matsuda
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo W 12 Jaime Barcelona
Cesar Soto W 10 Alejandro Barrera
Rafael Hernandez W 10 Edinson Garcia
Wajib Suswanto W 10 Jonel Alivio
Shoji Kimura W 10 Mikihito Seto
Kim Un Ju D 10 Ruh Young Sim
Cruz Carbajal KO 9 Oscar Olivas
Oscar Larios KO 5 Feider Viloria

Junior Featherweights

Celestino Caballero KO 12 Lorenzo Parra
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 1 Daniel Ponce De Leon
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 2 Ifan Bone
Andres Romero W 10 Guadalupe Hernandez
Kenichi Yamaguchi W 10 Kaona Klongpajol

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 2 Cristian Faccio
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Anselmo Moreno W 12 Wladimir Sidorenko
(*Wins WBA Title*)
Vusi Malinga KO 4 Veerapol Sahaprom
Silence Mabuza KO 5 Damian Marchiano
Simone Maludrottu W 8 Tuncay Kaya
Kohei Ohba W 10 Takuro Kodama
Carmelo Ballone KO 10 Valery Yanchy
Eric Morel KO 3 Jose Bernal

Junior Bantamweights

Fernando Montiel KO 3 Luis Maldonado
Z Gorres W 10 Nick Otieno
Juan Carlos Reveco KO 4 Ricardo Toledo
Konosuke Tomiyama W 12 Norasing Kietprasanchai
Zolile Mbityi W 12 Masibulele Makepula
Jose Salgado W 10 Alfonso Torres
Lajuan Simon KO 1 James Morrow
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym KO 4 John Cut Siregar

Flyweights

Juan Landaeta W 11 Ronald Barrera
Adrian Hernandez Tech. Draw 5 Eric Ortiz
Luis Lazarte W 10 Gustavo Rodriguez
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin KO 2 Juharum Silaban
Victor Zaleta W 10 Jose Antonio Aguirre
Wandee Singwancha KO 4Roland Latuni

Junior Flyweights

Edgar Sosa KO 8 Takashi Kunishige
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Juanito Rubillar W 12 Omar Nino
Abel Ochoa KO 9 Francisco Soto

Strawweights

Raul Garcia W 12 Florante Condes
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Ryan Bito D 12 Arnel TadenaGideon Buthelezi W 12
Jonas Kgasago Toshikazu Waga W 12 Fabio Marfa

Sergio Mora W 12 Vernon Forrest

Uncasville, Connecticut: Mora, 154, Los Angeles, California, won a belt on the first season of *The Contender*, and he now has a WBC strap to go with it after capturing a 12-round majority decision over titleholder Forrest, 153¾, Atlanta, Georgia, at the Mohegan Sun Arena. The fight is a contender for Upset of the Year, as few gave "The Latin Snake" a chance against THE RING's number-one rated junior middleweight.

Judge John MacKaie (USA) scored the fight 115-113 and Anek Hongtongkam (Thailand) saw it 116-112, both for Mora. Gale Van Hoy (USA) scored it even, 114-114. THE RING scored it 115-113 Mora. The referee was Richard Flaherty (USA).

The bout was essentially two separate fights. The 37-year-old Forrest, who was making his second title defense, had the better of it through the first five rounds, counterpunching on the rare occasions when Mora committed to an attack. When Mora got close enough, Forrest landed his uppercut, but neither fighter generated much offense in the early rounds.

From the sixth round through the 12th, the 27-year-old Mora let his hands go more often and the tiring Forrest faded. A left hook that Mora landed early in the sixth round caused Forrest to hold and swung the momentum in the challenger's favor.

Mora did not hurt Forrest badly at any point—Forrest held enough to keep Mora from putting too many punches together—but Mora kept working, and Forrest was unable to match his energy until the final 10 seconds of the fight, when the veteran landed an overhand right that snapped Mora's head back.

In the final five rounds, Forrest won just one round on McKaie's scorecard (the 12th), one on Hontongkam's (the eighth), and two on Van Hoy's (the eighth and the 10th).

"Thank God, I deserved this," Mora, 21-0-1 (5), said after the career-best victory. "I knew I couldn't relax or get overconfident."

Said Forrest, 40-3 (29) with 1 no-contest, "He had a good game plan. I won't take anything from him. He fought a very good fight."

An immediate rematch is a possibility should Forrest enforce that clause in the contract.

Television: **Showtime**

Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Fight Nite, Tournament of Contenders, Goossen-Tutor Promotions, DiBella Entertainment**

(6-7-08)

Stephen Tobey

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Mora gives Forrest a left-handed facial

Paul Williams KO 1 Carlos Quintana

Uncasville, Connecticut: Making an emphatic statement, Williams, 145¾, Augusta, Georgia avenged his only defeat and regained the WBO welterweight title with a first-round stoppage of Quintana, 146, Moca, Puerto Rico, in Quintana's first title defense.

In their first meeting, on February 9, 2008, Quintana was technically superior to Williams and he handed "The Punisher" his first loss with a 12-round unanimous decision. That fight was the first defense for Williams, who took the title from Antonio Margarito on July 14, 2007.

On this night at the Mohegan Sun Arena, Williams, 26, wasted no time getting his offense going. Two minutes into the opening round, the 6'1" southpaw put Quintana, 31, on the canvas with three consecutive uppercuts. After Quintana got up, Williams landed a straight left hand that rocked Quintana again. Another left hand caused referee Eddie Claudio (USA) to step in and stop the fight just as Quintana started to fall face-first, Quintana awkwardly tackling Williams on the way down. The time of the stoppage was 2:15 of the first round.

"He caught me on an off night in the last fight," Williams, 33-1 (25), said. "You can't take the belt away from a

true champion. Good skills and good sparring allowed me to win this. I'm glad I have the belt back."

With the defeat, Quintana dropped to 25-2 (19). His only other loss was in December of 2006, when Miguel Cotto stopped him in five rounds in a bout for the vacant WBA title.

"I was caught cold, hit in the back of the head," Quintana said. "That was what did it. It was overwhelming."

Television: **Showtime**

Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Fight Nite, Tournament of Contenders, Goossen-Tutor Promotions, DiBella Entertainment**

(6-7-08)

Stephen Tobey

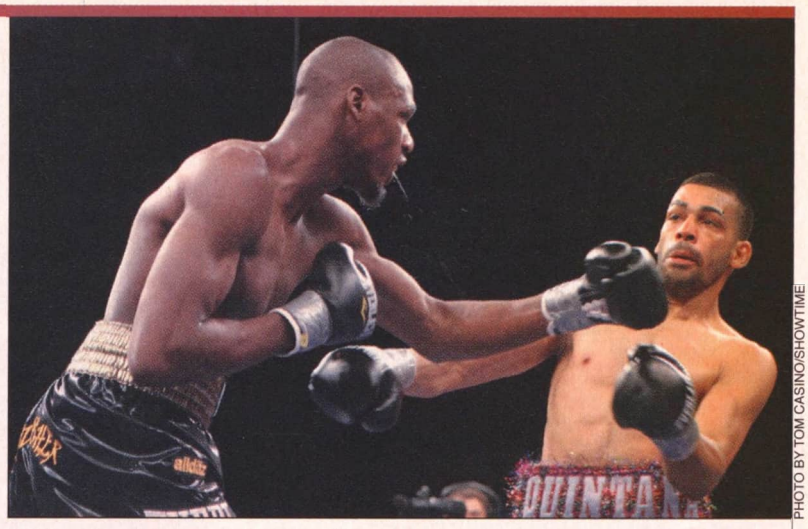

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Williams has Quintana retreating early

Cristian Mijares W 12 Alexander Munoz

Durango, Mexico: Junior bantamweight has become one of boxing's most appealing divisions, and a big part of it has been the emergence of talented Mexican craftsman Mijares and his eagerness to engage in quality matchups like this one against Munoz. Both were rated in the top three by THE RING entering the fight, and by the time he'd captured a clear (though somehow split) decision, Mijares had moved

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Paul Williams

Paul Williams insisted he couldn't have fought any worse than he did on the night of February 9, 2008, when he lost a close unanimous decision to Carlos Quintana in a major upset. Well, he certainly couldn't have fought any better than he did on June 7, when he got revenge over his previous tormentor with a first-round knockout.

When you think of fighters who avenged losses with one-round blastouts, the first people who should come to mind are Joe Louis (his legendary drubbing of Max Schmeling) and Roy Jones (his wipeout of Montell Griffin). That's pretty good company for Williams to find himself in.

Quintana is no joke—he'd spoiled the undefeated records of both Williams and Joel Julio, and his only previous loss came against Miguel Cotto—but Williams was driven to make the Puerto Rican look like a joke and their first fight look like a fluke. Two vicious knockdowns later, he'd done precisely that.

Now Williams is back on track and, with Floyd Mayweather retired, very much in the welterweight title picture. It isn't easy to undo 12 rounds of damage to your career in just one round, but that's what Williams did to earn Fighter of the Month honors.

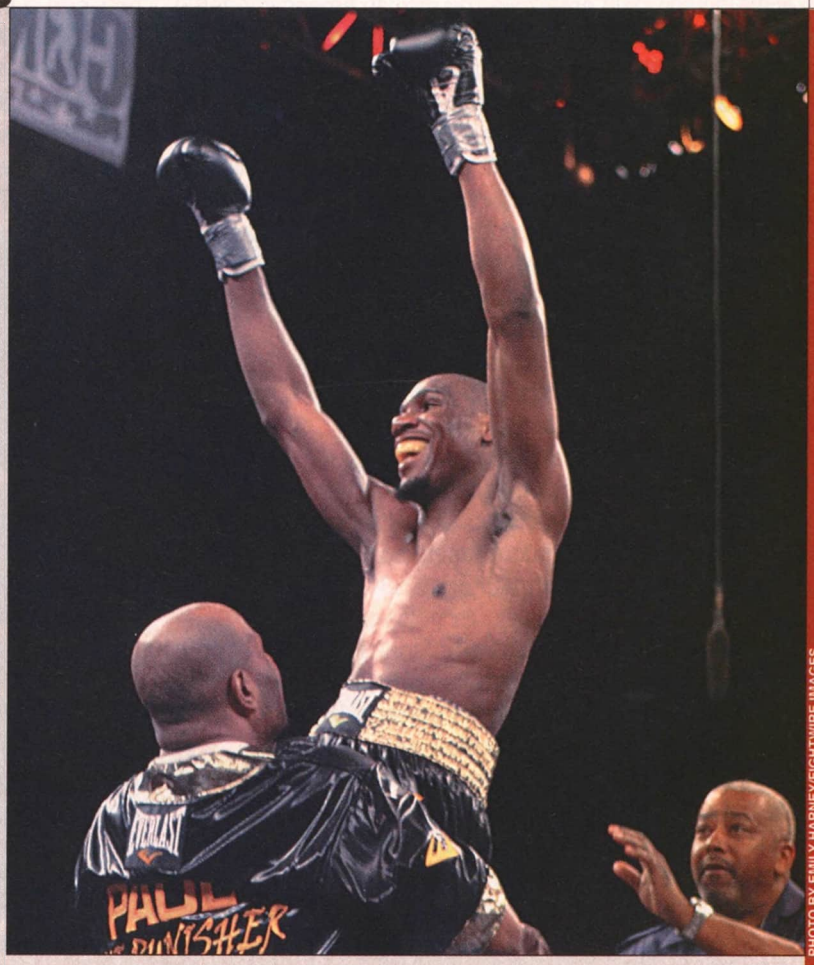

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Mijares looks to strike against Munoz

into the number-one slot and earned a spot on the pound-for-pound list.

Defending WBC beltholder Mijares, 114¾, was fighting in his hometown, but he nevertheless had reason to be nervous about fairness because Venezuelan Munoz, 114¾, was defending the WBA strap and the Venezuela-based WBA appointed one judge and protested the appointments of the others (both Americans) as well as American referee Jon Schorle. To the surprise of no one, the WBA's judge, Gustavo Padilla (Panama) had Munoz winning 115-112 in a fight that, while competitive, clearly belonged to the Mexican. Thankfully, Burt Clements and Marty Sammon both got it right, scoring 116-111 and 115-112, respectively, for Mijares.

This was Mijares' fifth defense, and Munoz' third defense of his second reign. The bout was fast-paced and entertaining, with 26-year-old southpaw Mijares' defense and skill generally keeping him a step ahead. His upper-body movement frustrated Munoz, 29, and the Venezuelan lost his cool for a moment in round six, hitting Mijares on the back of the head and losing a point. The eighth round was perhaps Mijares' best, as he wobbled Munoz with a left hand, and the local fighter dominated round nine as well, with Munoz, 32-3 (27), seeming to fade.

But the WBA titlist showed plenty of heart, throwing lots of leather during the last three rounds. He wasn't overly effective, his punches rather slow and wide, but his effort never subsided and his late-round surge prevented the cards from being completely one-sided. It was not enough, however, to earn him the fight, despite what judge Padilla thought.

Mijares, 35-3-2 (14), is scheduled to return to the ring on August 2 in Mexico, against an opponent to be determined. The boxing world badly wants to see a showdown with Fernando Montiel to determine THE RING champion, and that is being discussed for the fall.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **KO Entertainment**
(5-17-08)

Juan Manuel Lopez KO I Daniel Ponce De Leon

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Defending WBO 122-pound beltholder Ponce De Leon, 121, Chihuahua, Mexico, is no stranger to first-round knockouts; in his first 35 pro fights, the heavy-handed slugger registered 10 of them, including two in title defenses. After attempting the eighth defense of his belt, however, he's now more familiar with first-round kayos than he'd like to be, as immensely talented challenger Lopez, 121, Caguas, Puerto Rico, needed only 2 minutes 25 seconds to win this battle of hard-hitting southpaws.

Opening the televised portion of the Kelly Pavlik-Gary Lockett card at Boardwalk Hall, Lopez-Ponce De Leon figured to be the show-stealer, a tough-to-predict matchup between a titlist with great power and limited skills and a challenger with great potential who hadn't yet been tested. As it turned out, the fight didn't necessarily steal the show, but Lopez did as an individual. "JuanMa" made a loud statement by beating Ponce De Leon with such convincing ferocity.

Ponce, 27, came out firing his straight left hand, but

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Lopez finished Ponce De Leon in less than a round

Lopez did a good job of blocking most of the incoming shots. About a minute into the fight, Lopez countered with an excellent right hook, his go-to powerpunch. Members of the crowd chanted passionately for both fighters during the tense early moments.

Then, suddenly, Lopez scored with a beautiful left-right combination at close range, and the right hook did serious damage, causing Ponce De Leon to stumble backward on a delay and hit the canvas. Referee Michael Ortega (USA) gave him the count and when Ponce De Leon rose on unsteady legs, the Puerto Rican pounced immediately. Lopez' blazing hands dished out a beating, culminating with a six-punch combination in a neutral corner, of which five landed cleanly. The final shot was a right hand that dropped Ponce De Leon, 34-2 (30). Ortega counted to seven before waving off the fight.

"We have equal power, but I have better ability," Lopez, 22-0 (20), accurately observed afterward. "Supposedly, they were prepared for my right hook, but that wasn't the case."

Lopez is clearly a threat to RING champion Israel Vazquez, but the Puerto Rican will probably have to wait for now. As he's just 24 years of age, there should be no rush.

Television: **HBO**

Promoters: **Top Rank, Golden Boy Promotions**

(6-7-08)

Eric Raskin

Jorge Arce W 12 Devid Lookmahanak

Aguascalientes, Mexico: After losing badly to Cristian Mijares and struggling unexpectedly against Tomas Rojas, both southpaws, Arce and his people suggested his days of fighting lefties were over. But they went back on their word for this fight against unknown but tough Thai southpaw Devid, and Arce nearly paid the price, eking out a majority decision at Plaza Monumental. The bout did nothing to slow talk of "Travieso" being a faded force.

Arce, 114½, Los Mochis, Mexico, built up an early lead, but Devid, 114, came on over the last four rounds to make the reading of the scorecards a nailbiter. In the end, judge Dej Sri-Ampai (Thailand) saw it 115-114 for Arce, Lou Filippo (USA) had it 115-113 for Arce, and Benjamin Rendon (Mexico) scored it even at 114-114.

Arce, 28, fought a bit less aggressively than usual, doing more boxing behind the jab. He said afterward that he hurt his left hand, which would explain why he didn't seem to be punching with his normal authority. Still, the popular Mexican outhustled the relatively tentative Devid early, and through eight rounds, the cards were one-sided. Then Arce began to wilt, and Devid, 18-2 (9), fought with more urgency, and the result was a tightening of the scores. Arce looked relieved to reach the finish line on his feet.

Arce, 49-4-1 (37), is now a mandatory challenger for Mijares, but given the lopsided nature of their first fight, Top Rank seems to be looking in a different direction for Travieso. There's talk of moving up two weight classes to challenge RING junior feather champ Israel Vazquez, a fight for which Arce will be a massive underdog but will get paid well.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**

Promoter: **Top Rank**

(5-17-08)

Fernando Montiel KO 3 Luis Maldonado

San Luis Potosi, Mexico: Just two weeks after Cristian Mijares staked his claim to recognition as the world's top junior bantamweight by beating Alexander Munoz, Montiel, 115, Los Mochis, Mexico, made a strong statement of his own, wiping out the usually durable Maldonado, 115, Mexicali, Mexico, in just three rounds at the Plaza de Toros El Paseo. It was Montiel's seventh defense of his second WBO title reign.

Maldonado had been stopped twice previously in flyweight title challenges, but both bouts, against Nonito Donaire and Vic Darchinyan, went eight rounds before "Titi" caved. Fresh off a four-round destruction of Martin Castillo and a stirring slugfest against Luis Melendez before that, Montiel, 29, continued his transformation from boxer to banger and demonstrated just how dangerous he can be in this mode with this surprisingly quick victory.

Montiel slammed home hard left hooks in the opening round, focusing particularly on the body, and Maldonado, 30, had few answers. Montiel was simply too fast and hit too hard for the straight-up, predictable challenger. A right hook-left cross combo forced Maldonado to take a knee with 20 seconds to go in the round, and though he should have been saved by the bell after rising, the round seemed to go about 10 seconds too long, allowing Montiel to tee off with vicious bodyshots.

Round two featured more of the same, including another late knockdown, this one of the flash variety. A counter left hand muscled Maldonado down with about 20 ticks left on the clock, extending Montiel's landslide lead on the scorecards.

Montiel, 37-2-1 (28), couldn't miss in round three, and Maldonado gamely slugged with him, figuring a lucky punch was his only hope of winning. The challenger's willingness opened him up for a hasty end, however. With about 40 seconds left in the round, Montiel knocked him down with a counter right, and at the conclusion of American referee Raul Caiz Jr.'s eight-count, Montiel pounced, a torrent of heavy blows along the ropes prompting the stoppage at the 2:58 mark with Maldonado, 37-3-1 (28), still on his feet.

Montiel was expected as of press time to fight on the Miguel Cotto-Antonio Margarito pay-per-view undercard, perhaps against four-time title challenger Jose Navarro. Hopefully, a showdown with Mijares will follow.

Promoter: **Promociones Zanfer**

(5-31-08)

Anselmo Moreno W 12 Wladimir Sidorenko

Düsseldorf, Germany: There was little to suggest that Moreno, 117¾, San Miguelito, Panama, might secure an upset victory over Sidorenko, 117½, Hamburg Germany, via

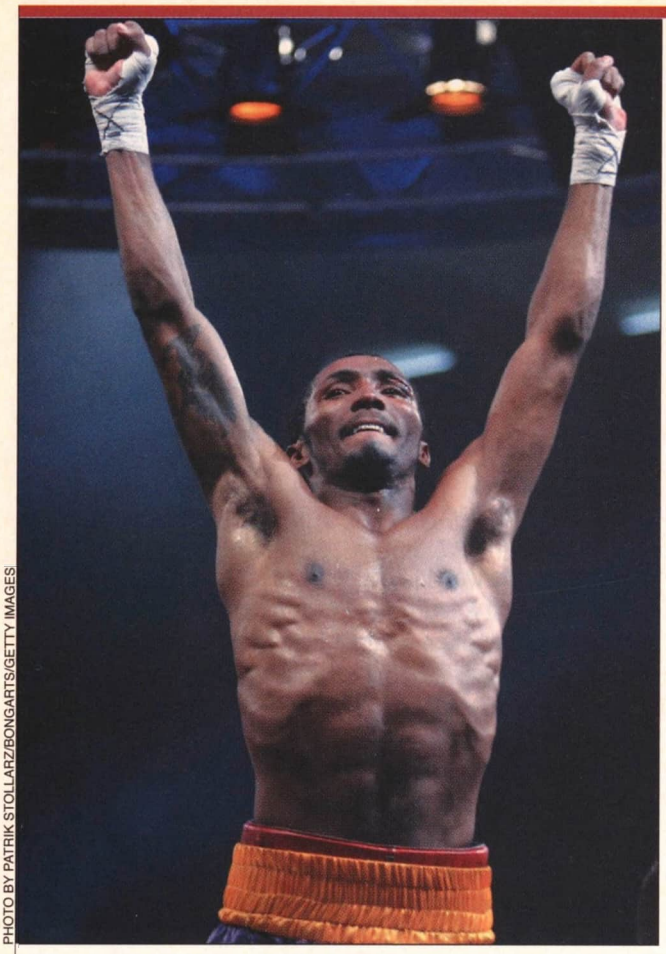

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Moreno celebrates his upset victory over Sidorenko

Energodar, Ukraine, who had held the WBA bantamweight title for three years. The 23-year-old challenger had boxed only once outside of his native Panama—in Haiti—and his opposition for the most part was modest. But a unanimous decision over Mexico's Ricardo Vargas, who went the distance with Rafael Marquez three years ago, secured him this shot and he took it with both hands, grabbing a lead early and remaining calm when Sidorenko fought back in the later rounds. It was Sidorenko's seventh title defense.

The key to Moreno's success was the positive start that he made by utilizing his southpaw jab and good lateral movement to control the opening rounds. Sidorenko, 21-1-2 (7), was unable to work his way in and he could not even cut off the ring effectively. Moreno, 22-1-1 (8), managed to avoid punishment in these early skirmishes, and after four rounds, he had built a substantial platform that, ultimately, would carry him to victory.

Belatedly, Sidorenko put together a sustained assault in the fifth round when he got inside and unloaded damaging punches. If he expected Moreno to unravel, however, he was surprised again. The Panamanian challenger proved durable and game, withstanding Sidorenko's attacks over the next few rounds before hitting back strongly. The Ukrainian's hooks and uppercuts threatened to swing the bout heavily in his favor, but Moreno continued to discourage Sidorenko's supporters by skipping out of harm's way again and, surprisingly, staying fresh enough to remain on his toes as the fight entered the last couple of rounds.

Sidorenko moved methodically forward in the penultimate round and he landed the more telling punches in the last, but Moreno believed that he had done enough to win and the judges agreed. Juan Manuel Garcia Reyes (Spain) and Francesco Martinez (New Zealand) both scored 116-112 for Moreno, and Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) made it unanimous with a score of 116-113. THE RING also scored 116-113 for Moreno. The referee was Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico).

"To us, Wladimir Sidorenko didn't lose this fight," Dietmar Poszwa, Sidorenko's manager, insisted. "Therefore we have filed a protest with the WBA. We want a direct rematch. Sidorenko should become the top contender in the rankings."

Moreno declared that he would be happy to meet Sidorenko again. "I won the fight clearly and, as for a rematch, I will be glad to make myself available anytime," he said. Sidorenko acknowledged that his effort deserved no better than a draw. "Moreno was a very good opponent, very experienced," he said. "I thought it should have been a draw, and I'd be very happy to get a rematch."

Promoter: **Universum-Box Promotion**

(5-31-08)

Brian Doogan

Anthony Mundine W 12 Sam Soliman

***Melbourne, Australia*:** If you're looking for a confusing alphabet title situation, how's this: The WBA listed Joe Calzaghe as "undisputed champion" in the super middleweight rankings (rightly so), but also listed Mundine as "champion" in the division, suggesting a complete lack of understanding about what the word "undisputed" means. Prior to his fight against "King" Soliman, there was controversy as to whether Mundine would actually be permitted to defend his belt against his fellow Aussie, because Mikkel Kessler was listed as Mundine's mandatory challenger and Mundine had made it clear he wasn't interested in another fight against Kessler, who'd already beaten him convincingly in 2005. Ultimately, the Mundine-Soliman fight went ahead, with the understanding that if Mundine won, he would vacate and the winner of Kessler's June fight against obscure Dimitri Sartison would get the belt.

Got all that?

This was the third fight between Mundine and Soliman. They first fought in September 2001, Mundine winning a close and controversial points decision. For years Soliman demanded a rematch. Mundine obliged in March 2007 with the vacant WBA title on the line and knocked Soliman out in nine rounds.

This time, at the Vodafone Arena, 33-year-old Mundine, 165½, Sydney, won again, but he was far less impressive. The 34-year-old Soliman, 165¾, Melbourne, best known in America through his appearance on Season Three of *The Contender* and a December 2005 points loss to Winky

PHOTO BY MARK DADSWELL/GETTY IMAGES

Soliman (left) gave Mundine a tougher fight than expected

Wright, did everything possible to disrupt Mundine's offense while making himself the ultimate moving target.

Soliman began the fight moving quickly and circling around the ring, throwing punches wildly from a long way out and using exaggerated head movement. As the rounds went on, the fight looked more and more like their awkward first match. Mundine's workrate was poor and he was unable to set for his best punches due to Soliman's constant movement. At times, Mundine was simply walking forward with his right hand cocked, waiting for the infrequent opportunities to catch Soliman cleanly.

Soliman's best round was the ninth, when a left hook caught Mundine, 32-3 (23), on the chin and pushed him back into the ropes. The crowd enjoyed the surge, chanting "Sam-my! Sam-my!" Soliman, 35-11 (13), was clearly outworking Mundine in round 10, and by the end of 12, it seemed close.

The judges didn't see it all that close, however. Pinit Prayadsab (Thailand) and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) both scored 116-112, while Michael Leé (South Korea) had it 117-112, all for Mundine. The referee was Derek Milham (Australia).

"He came better prepared," declared Mundine, explaining why he was not able to win by knockout this time.

Alphabet titles today are passed around more and more like old magazines. In the week after the fight, as expected, Mundine gave up the WBA belt to move down to middleweight, leaving Kessler to fight for the vacant title. All this so that Kessler can be ranked as "champion" while the man who beat him last November, Calzaghe, is found listed in the same rankings as "undisputed champion."

Promoter: **Tony Mundine**

(5-28-08)

Paul Upham

Celestino Caballero KO 12
Lorenzo Parra

San Juan de Los Moros, Venezuela: Former WBA flyweight titleholder Parra clearly needed to move up in weight after missing on the scales by nearly five pounds for a March '07 defense against Takefumi Sakata. But the Venezuelan may have moved up too far, jumping three classes to the junior featherweight division, and he compounded the challenge by taking on one of the division's best, WBA titlist Caballero, in just his second fight at the new weight. The result was a one-sided bout that ended at the start of the 12th round when referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) decided, on the advice of the ringside doctor, that Parra couldn't continue due to a fractured jaw.

Caballero, 121, Panama City, Panama, was making his fourth defense since knocking out Somsak Sithchatchawal in October '06, and he did it on the home turf of Parra, 121, Machiques, Venezuela, in the main event of the WBA's annual "KO Drugs" festival. Parra, 29, gave away nearly seven inches in height, and though he had some good moments early, the 31-year-old beltholder gradually took over. By the 10th round, Caballero had his hands all the way down by his sides, daring Parra, 28-2 (18), to hit him, but the challenger couldn't get close and couldn't do any damage when he did land.

Caballero, on the other hand, was obviously doing damage, breaking his opponent's jaw. It was clearly impeding Parra's ability to fight by the end of the 11th round, so when the bell rang to start the 12th, Pabon called time and soon called a halt.

There is talk now of a possible alphabet unification fight between Caballero, 29-2 (20), and IBF titlist Steve Molitor, though Israel Vazquez remains the division's true, lineal champion.

(6-7-08)

Herman Ngoudjo W 12
Souleymane M'Baye

Montreal, Quebec: What appeared on paper to be a toss-up proved to be a comfortable win for Montreal resident Ngoudjo, 140, who prevailed over M'Baye, 140, despite a left eye that rapidly swelled closed in the third round. The 28-year-old Ngoudjo's inside work was simply too industrious for the more experienced M'Baye in a fight that positioned the winner for a shot at the IBF strap held by Paulie Malignaggi. Ngoudjo, who came up just short in a points verdict to Malignaggi in January, would no doubt like an opportunity to reverse that outcome. But a big-money showdown scheduled for Malignaggi against Ricky Hatton in November looks certain to defer that opportunity.

Although the smoother counterpuncher, M'Baye, 33, showed a reluctance to let his hands go in a near repeat of the '07 performance that cost him the WBA belt against a busier Gavin Rees. In that bout, and again with Ngoudjo,

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

Ngoudjo overcomes a swollen eye to decision M'Baye

there was a frustrating sense that M'Baye, 36-3-1 (25), was capable of doing more but simply allowed himself to be outworked.

Cameroon-born Ngoudjo, 17-2 (9), boxed well to take the opening round, but quickly switched his attack to the inside in round two, where he repeatedly let his hands go with rapid-fire combinations, setting the tempo for the ensuing rounds. M'Baye, Clichy, France, did his best work from long range, where he scored impressively with counter rights, but otherwise seemed content to posture and slip punches without fully exploiting Ngoudjo's pressing offense.

Despite a halt in round four that saw referee Marlon B. Wright (Canada), summon the ringside physician to assess Ngoudjo's eye, M'Baye fought with a casualness that suggested he was simply biding time. Meanwhile, Ngoudjo was further beset by complications in round six when blood began to flow from the swollen eye. An early stoppage became a worry, but M'Baye's utter indifference to targeting the cut would prove one of several tactical errors that cost him a potential win.

"Souleymane did not capitalize on a wounded animal," commented Ngoudjo's trainer, Howard Grant, afterward. "When you got a wounded prey in there, you have to take advantage of it. Herman fought 10 rounds with one eye. He showed a lot of guts."

While M'Baye fought with a restrained approach, one could sense the desperation building in Noudjo as the bout moved into the second half. Exhorted by his corner to keep his guard up and throw quick combinations, Ngoudjo maintained constant pressure and closed out rounds with heated flurries.

A slick jab and selectively placed right hands by M'Baye were enough to draw blood from Ngoudjo's nose in the ninth. But, based on a stubborn insistence to only fight in spots, M'Baye's punch output proved much too sparing to decisively garner him any of the close middle rounds.

M'Baye came to life in the 10th, as though suddenly awakened to the reality that the bout was getting away from him, and scored well from long range with combinations that saw Ngoudjo fall into a defensive shell for the better part of the round. But, as if recalling his near misses with Malignaggi and Jose Luis Castillo in '07, Ngoudjo went to work in the final two heats, throwing with abandon to ensure the win.

Both fighters raised their hands victoriously at the bell, reflecting the sentiment of many of the 7,852 at Uniprix Stadium who felt they had witnessed a narrowly contested fight. The judges, however, had a better view and all saw it for the same man, with Bernard Bruni (USA) and Benoit Rousell (Canada) giving it to Ngoudjo by scores of 117-111 and 115-113 respectively. THE RING agreed with the 116-112 card rendered by judge Pasquale Procopio (Canada).

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Groupe Yvon Michel (GYM)**
(6-6-08)
Paul Salgado

Shaun George KO 9 Chris Byrd

Las Vegas, Nevada: It didn't take long for what was supposed to be a new beginning to develop into just another sad ending. Former heavyweight beltholder Byrd shed close to 40 pounds to start a new phase of his career at light heavyweight, but one number was more important than his poundage, and that was Byrd's age, 37. Too many years in the ring and too many tough fights against larger men had taken their toll, and fringe contender George, 29, took advantage by dominating Byrd and scoring a career-best win.

Byrd's astounding defensive reflexes were what once made him an elite fighter, but in the very first round at the Thomas & Mack Center, George, 175, Brooklyn, New York, exposed how far gone those reflexes were. He landed the counter right hand with ease, and Byrd's chin was surprisingly fragile. In round two, a right hand staggered Byrd, 174, Las Vegas, and the next one dropped him on the seat of his pants in bad shape. From that point on, Byrd struggled to get his legs back and could never get anything going offensively. George attacked in spots and eased up in spots, but he remained in complete control, arguably winning every round.

We seemed headed for a distance fight in this scheduled 10-rounder, until suddenly, in round nine, George landed a tremendous left uppercut-right hook combination that rocked Byrd and caused him to fall to the canvas awkwardly, injuring his left shoulder. Byrd rose and George jumped on him in the corner, raining heavy leather until Byrd was practically

begging referee Jay Nady (USA) to stop the fight, which he did at the 2:42 mark.

"I want to fight the best fighters in the world," George, 17-2-2 (8), said afterward. "I'll fight any contender out there—whoever, whenever, however. I'm not scared of anyone out there. Give me Adrian Diaconu. Give me Glen Johnson. I want them bad."

As poorly as the fight went for Byrd, 40-5-1 (24), things got even worse immediately afterward, when he was given painkillers for his dislocated shoulder and had a bad reaction to the drugs and passed out in his dressing room. He was rushed to the hospital and released later that night.

"I couldn't keep up with him," Byrd said of George. "He took me to school."

Byrd's wife, Tracy, insists this will be the end of her husband's boxing career, and though the fighter hadn't officially announced his retirement as of press time, he hadn't said anything contradicting his wife either.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Banner Promotions**
(5-16-08)

Yuriorkis Gamboa W 10 Darling Jimenez

Primm, Nevada: Rising junior lightweight star Gamboa continued his frenetic climb with a decisive, albeit unspectacular, unanimous decision against former prospect Jimenez. The fight, just the 10th in Gamboa's young career, headlined an HBO *Boxing After Dark* tripleheader at Buffalo Bill's Star Arena.

The charismatic Gamboa appeared to win nine of the 10 rounds, but Jimenez was competitive throughout the fight. Gamboa, 10-0 (8), showed his more experienced opponent little respect from the opening bell as he came out firing flurries at Jimenez' head.

He buzzed Jimenez, 23-3-2 (14), on a couple of occasions, but the New York-based Dominican stood his ground and managed to catch Gamboa, who often fought with his hands at his waist, with a counter left hook to the chin in the final 20 seconds of the opening round. The shot didn't faze Gamboa, who immediately responded with another combo.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Gamboa has Jimenez under pressure

Jimenez, a four-time former New York Golden Gloves champ, showed more poise and fought at a higher tempo against the faster Gamboa in the second and third rounds. But Gamboa, looking smooth and confident, dodged Jimenez' counters and got enough shots through via his various combinations to take the rounds.

Gamboa, 128¾, started the fourth aggressively and had Jimenez covering up after landing a few left hooks upstairs. But Jimenez, 131, weathered the storm and finally took advantage of Gamboa's neglect for defense as he scored a flash knockdown with a straight right one minute into the round.

Upset, Gamboa jumped right back up, then jabbed and held until the bell. Back on the offensive in the fifth, Gamboa smothered Jimenez with his relentless attack and stunned him midway through the round with a right cross.

The 26-year-old Gamboa, a 2004 Olympic gold medalist who defected from Cuba in 2006, had never gone beyond six rounds as a pro. He still went at Jimenez as if he wanted to end it with every punch, but Gamboa's pace began to slow during the second half of the fight as it became obvious Jimenez, 28, wasn't going anywhere.

Jimenez didn't land often or hard enough, and ate far too many shots, to take advantage. CompuBox had him landing 113 of 441 punches (26 percent), compared to 271 of 807 for Gamboa (34 percent). Gamboa tossed Jimenez to the floor in the seventh, but referee Russell Mora (USA) correctly ruled it was not a knockdown.

Gamboa won 97-92 on the cards of Raul Caiz Sr. (USA) and Patricia Jarman (USA), while Dalby Shirley (USA) scored it 99-91. The Ring also had it 99-91 for Gamboa, whose German promoter, Ahmet Oner, was reportedly so upset with his fighter's lack of respect for Jimenez that he fired trainer Osmiri Fernandez in the dressing room afterward.

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**
(5-17-08)

Alfredo Angulo KO 5 Richard Gutierrez

Primm, Nevada: It's pretty simple: Put two forward-moving bangers in the ring together, and more often than not, it's going to be a fun fight. Such was the case at Buffalo Bill's Star Arena as the similar Angulo and Gutierrez put on the best bout of an HBO *Boxing After Dark* tripleheader.

It ended a bit early, though the result probably would have been the same regardless. Hurt midway through the fifth, Gutierrez took several hard shots as Angulo patiently worked to finish the job. When Angulo landed a straight right to the chin that had Gutierrez reeling forward, but still punching, referee Tony Weeks (USA) stepped in 12 seconds before the bell.

It was a big win for Angulo, a 2004 Mexican Olympian and a rising junior middleweight. The 25-year-old is busy,

aggressive, and makes for exciting fights, especially when matched against opponents who like to trade.

Gutierrez, who suffered a close points loss to Joshua Clottey in 2006, was the constant, forward-moving stalker. The 29-year-old Colombian landed a series of right hands in the final minute of the opening round and appeared to have the early edge despite an Angulo flurry in the final 10 seconds. Working mostly from the outside, the busier Angulo threw 127 punches in the first round, but landed only 33, according to CompuBox.

Angulo, 13-0 (10), began coming forward more in the second, when he snapped Gutierrez' head back with a straight right in the center of the ring midway through the round. That caught the attention of Gutierrez, 24-2 (14), who began backing up and bouncing on his toes. Angulo landed a hard looping left to the face in the final 20 seconds of the round.

The two slugged it out at close range during an exciting third round that saw both land their share of hard shots. Angulo, 154, was emerging as the more polished, fluid fighter, however, and his punches had more on them. After the round, Gutierrez' corner yelled at him for not going to the body or jabbing.

The fourth was more of the same, with Gutierrez, 152, seeming to tire against his opponent's unmerciful pace and bodywork. Gutierrez, who started talking trash, landed a few solid rights, but Angulo's flush combinations easily won him the round.

Gutierrez hurt "Perro" 35 seconds into the fifth with a compact left hook to the chin. Angulo backpedaled across the ring and into the corner, but showed veteran poise in surviving Gutierrez' onslaught. With Gutierrez spent by the midway mark, Angulo caught him with a big overhand right to the jaw, then a one-two that set up the finish.

Averaging 117 shots per round, Angulo landed 167 of 585 punches (29 percent). CompuBox had Gutierrez connecting on 83 of 323 blows (26 percent).

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**

(5-17-08)

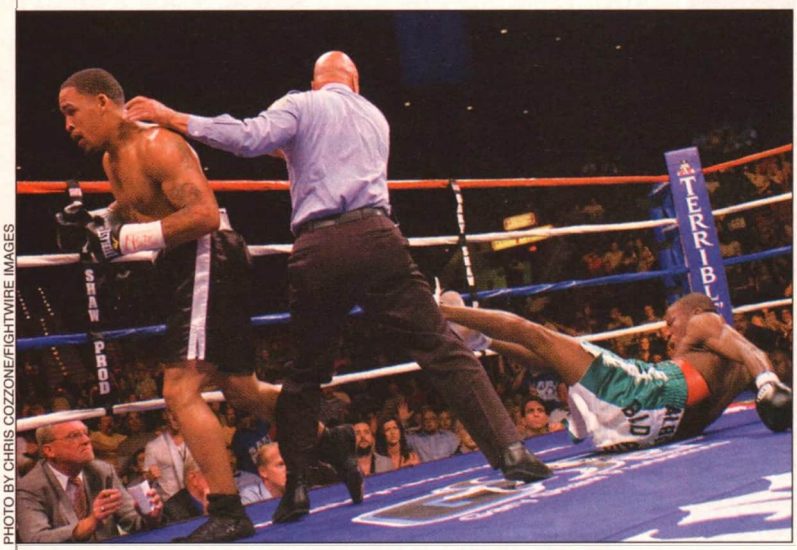

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

It took only 66 seconds for Kirkland to dispose of Albert

James Kirkland KO 1 Eromosele Albert

Primm, Nevada: If there's a current incarnation of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, it might be Kirkland. The junior middleweight prospect is all over his opponents from the opening bell like a hyper-caffeinated car salesman, with the goal of overwhelming them early.

The blitz approach might not be the safest in terms of building a career, but so far it's working just fine for the 24-year-old Texan, a pupil of former female fighter Ann Wolfe.

"I may lack on doing some things [on defense]," Kirkland told the New York *Daily News*. "I feel I'm very good at defense because my offense is my defense. If you bang a person out, you don't need a defense."

He didn't need one against Albert, whom CompuBox had landing just three of 17 shots in the 66 seconds that the fight lasted. Albert, 21-2 (10), was supposed to represent Kirkland's toughest test. The 33-year-old Nigerian had won 11 straight fights since a points loss to Julio Jean in 2005.

The southpaw Kirkland, 22-0 (19), immediately went after his more experienced foe, dropping him with a straight left less than a minute into the fight, then quickly unloading a follow-up flurry that convinced ref Joe Cortez (USA) to step in and save Albert, 152½.

It was the second straight first-round knockout for Kirkland, 154, and the seventh of his career. The bout was the first fight of an HBO *Boxing After Dark* tripleheader at Buffalo Bill's Star Arena. Of the three fighters showcased—Kirkland, Alfredo Angulo, and Yuriorkis Gamboa—Kirkland gave the most explosive performance and may be the most ready to face legit contenders.

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**

(5-17-08)

Vusi Malinga KO 4 Veeraphol Sahaprom

Nonthaburi, Thailand: A boxer's eyes tell no lies. Once he's inside the ring and the punches begin to fly, all frivolities are set aside and the honesty begins. Questions receive answers. Who is stronger, faster, and better on that one particular day? The young and fresh inevitably defeat the old and tattered, and often forcefully remind those who overstay their welcome that boxing is a youthful pursuit.

Two-time bantamweight titleholder Veeraphol learned this the hard way at the Bodindecha School, suffering a presumably career-ending fourth-round TKO at the hands of South Africa's Malinga. The victorious Malinga will now move on to challenge Hozumi Hasegawa of Japan for the WBC bauble.

Veeraphol reigned in the bantamweight division for seven long years, but against Malinga, he was but a shell of his former self. For three rounds that must have seemed like an eternity, Malinga brutalized the Thai with a combination of hooks and uppercuts, until

referee Bruce McTavish (Philippines) mercifully stopped the carnage at 36 seconds of round four.

Veeraphol turns 40 in November. Unlike George Foreman and Bernard Hopkins, Veeraphol was unable to turn back the clock. Three years ago, when he lost his title, suffering a stunning unanimous decision defeat at the hands of Hasegawa, he steadfastly refused to believe the signs, instead choosing to chase the rematch. Determined to prove his detractors wrong, the result was far from satisfactory. The second time around, Hasegawa knocked him cold in nine rounds. Still he refused to believe his better days were behind him. He fought on against no-name opposition, winning nine in a row, but he was buzzed in several of the fights.

Southpaw Malinga, 118, showed no fear of the former beltholder and came after him from the get-go. Veeraphol, 118, provided zero resistance and he displayed all the signs of a ring-worn fighter. Instead of confidently marching forward as in past years, Veeraphol searched for a safe haven. Flat-footed and unable to pull the trigger, with no place to hide and no respite in site, he took his beating with stoic pride.

In the third round, an uppercut landed flush to the point of the chin and Veeraphol fell to the canvas face-first. He rose on shaky legs, and the bell momentarily saved him from his fate. He had a minute's rest, but then 36 seconds after, the bout was over. Malinga strode forward like a man on a mission and pushed the Thai against the ropes, unleashing a barrage of punches to which there would be no reply. When referee McTavish stopped the bout, no one complained.

Losing never comes easy to great fighters, and after the bout, Veeraphol, 61-4-2 (43), wept inconsolably. It was a humiliating defeat for the proud fighter. Perhaps Malinga, 18-2-1 (11), said it best: "Sahaprom was a great, great champion, but he had his time and that time is over."

Four days after the defeat, Veeraphol announced his retirement.

Promoter: **Nakornluang Promotions**
(6-12-2008)
Scott Mallon

Yusuke Kobori KO 3 Jose Alfaro

Tokyo, Japan: In a case of more WBA madness, in the division in which Nate Campbell is listed as "undisputed champion," unheralded Japanese challenger Kobori, 135, took on so-called WBA lightweight "champion" Alfaro, 134¼, at Differ Ariake in Alfaro's first defense of the belt. The underdog Kobori came off the deck in the second round, caught Alfaro with a vicious left hook in the third round, and halted the Nicaraguan at 2:08 of the third to claim the alphabet trinket.

It was a stunning upset on the Japanese "Boxing Day," the 56th anniversary of Yoshio Shirai becoming Japan's first world champ by dethroning flyweight king Dado Marino. Kobori said before the fight, "I've nothing to lose and will fight the champ toe-to-toe from the beginning." It seemed a very risky strategy against the hard-punching Alfaro, but it

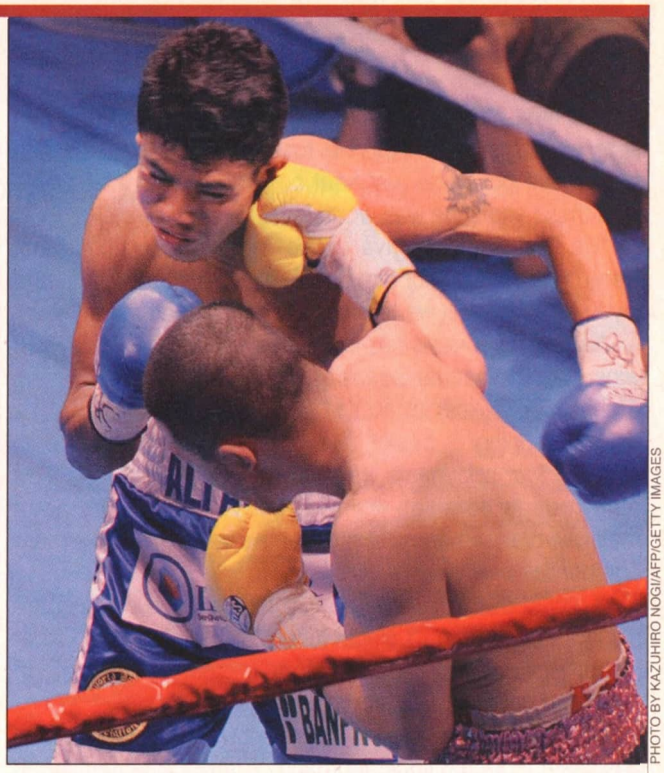

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kobori bangs home a right en route to alphabet title

resulted in success. Kobori, a career 130-pounder, had no experience in campaigning in the 135-pound class, but his superior speed and determination overwhelmed Alfaro.

Kobori launched a furious opening attack and had the upper hand against the slow-starting Nicaraguan in the first round. The Japanese challenger landed a solid right to Alfaro's face and scored with busier combinations to win the opening session.

In round two, the 24-year-old Nicaraguan fought back and exploded a looping left hook that sent Kobori, 26, staggering to the ropes, and Alfaro followed with a strong, accurate right hand. Had the ropes not caught him, Kobori would have hit the deck, and referee Rafael Ramos (USA) tolled an eight-count for the bewildered challenger. But Kobori fought back hard and stunned the slower-fisted Alfaro late in the round.

In the third, Kobori turned loose with a well-timed left hook to the button, and Alfaro went down and took the third man's count on his knees. Alfaro was badly hurt, barely regained his feet, and resumed fighting on rubbery legs. Kobori swarmed over his groggy opponent with a flurry of punches that had him reeling to the ropes. As Kobori unloaded merciless combos, Ramos declared a well-timed halt to save Alfaro, 20-4 (18) with 1 no-contest, from further punishment.

Kobori, 23-2-1 (12), jubilantly said, "I'm thankful for people's support. The champ was strong and hit hard, but my punches caught the target well. I'm tired and want to go to bed early."

Promoters: **Kadoebi Jewel Promotions, Don King Productions**
(5-19-08)
Joe Koizumi ■

(Continued from Page 24)

Criscio said. "Then I met Alfredo at the gym and had him spar with Chad and Kofi. He took some hellacious shots from those guys and just kept coming. I knew if he could take those shots, he was worth looking into.

"He was about to give up boxing because things just weren't working out for him. I told him, 'With your talent, and if you listen to what we tell you, you'll be a champion.'"

Angulo responded not long after with *ShoBox*-televised wins over Emmanuel Gonzales (KO 2), the once-promising Archek TerMeliksetian (KO 1), and Ricardo Cortes (KO 1), before stopping Gutierrez on HBO. The combined records of those four opponents was 71-7-1. They lasted less than nine rounds between them. Clearly, Angulo has been matched harder than most prospects and it reflects his management's confidence in him.

"I would put him in with any junior middleweight in the world," said Criscio. "I would love to put him in with Oscar De La Hoya. Alfredo has a lot to learn, but he has enough heart and power to beat anyone in boxing right now."

That's a manager talking up his fighter. Farhood, for one, advises a more cautious approach: "There's a temptation to rush Angulo because every time he's moved up, he's scored an impressive stoppage win. What he needs now more than anything is rounds. I'd get him a couple of solid 10-round wins before I'd match him with a top-10 fighter."

That's fine with Angulo, who says he's always in the gym working and trying to improve and doesn't have any particular preference for his next opponent.

"I like what I do because I'm good at it," he said. "That's why I train very hard and am always in the gym. I'll fight whomever [promoter] Gary Shaw picks for me. I'm the gym every day so when they call to fight I'll be ready."

What Angulo lacks in actual pro rounds, he gets in the gym. He lives in Coachella, in southern California, and, forever in search of high-end sparring, splits his time between the La Habra Boxing Club, the PAL gym in Montebello, the Wild Card gym, and the Maywood Boxing Club. In the past year he's sparred with Antonio Margarito, Alfonso Gomez, Jose Armado Santa Cruz, Rashad Holloway, Sam Soliman, and Roman Karmazin.

All that work showed itself when Gutierrez rocked him in that fifth round. As hurt as he was, Angulo didn't panic. "I recuperated quickly," Angulo said. "It woke me up. [Weeks] stopped the fight at the right time. He's one of the best referees in the sport. He did a good job."

Criscio agrees, saying the jaw-rattling hook that sent Angulo into the ropes was, though unpleasant, something his fighter needed at that moment in his young career.

"It woke him up. He needed that because he's been knocking these guys out without getting touched. That shot made him think, *Oh, s___. I better do something or I can lose this fight.* Then he took care of business like any great fighter will do."

Angulo admits he made some mistakes against Gutierrez that he is eager to correct in the gym. He says his biggest problem is that he doesn't move his head enough, but the problem against Gutierrez in particular was that Kirkland's fight, which preceded his, ended so quickly he didn't get a chance to warm up in the dressing room. His style weaknesses, though, are apparent to anyone: He's slow of hand and foot. He's not especially hard to hit. He gives the impression that a sound technical boxer with good legs will box rings around him.

Still, so far, his strengths, which are considerable, have seen him through.

"I am always throwing punches," he said. "And I think when I'm in the ring. I try to always stay calm and think." You could be forgiven for thinking the opposite when he is hacking away at a wounded opponent the way he was poor Gutierrez. He looked positively feral pounding away at Gutierrez during the fight's final moments. It's that ferocity that has many fantasizing about a match down the road between he and the other junior middleweight prospect everyone's talking about.

"If Angulo's ever matched with Kirkland," Farhood said, "call God and tell him to stop the world so nobody misses it." ■

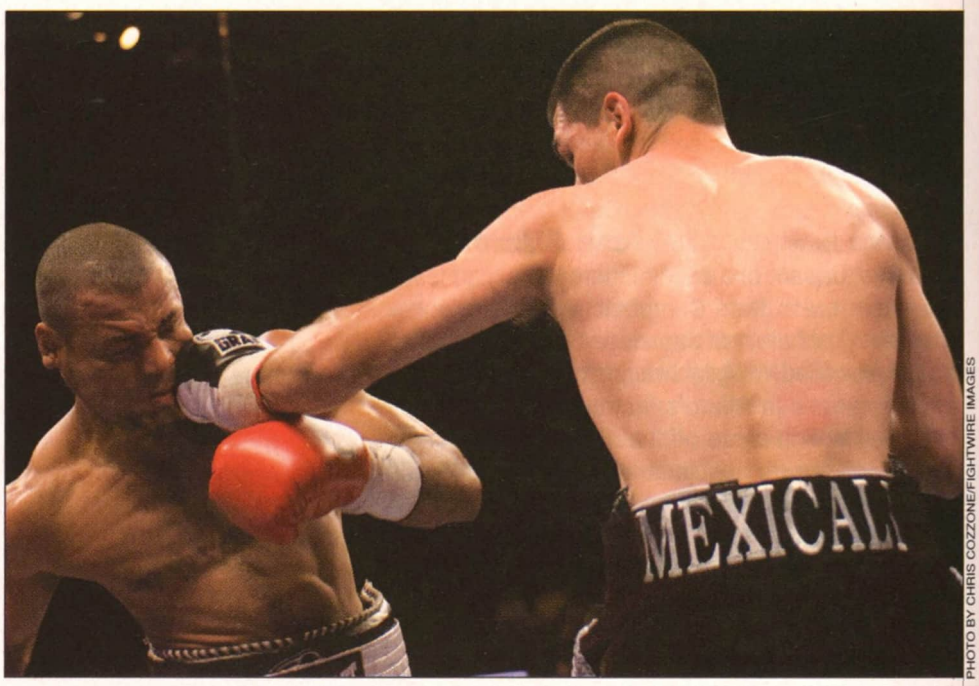

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Angulo drives a left into the face of Richard Gutierrez en route to fifth-round TKO victory. Angulo overcame a scare, when he was rocked by a hook, to tally the most impressive victory of his undefeated pro career.

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Sept. 1999: Mayweather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Also: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

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Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

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Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

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Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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World Lightweight Championship

Joel Casamayor

Main Event 12 Rounds

Juan Manuel Marquez

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

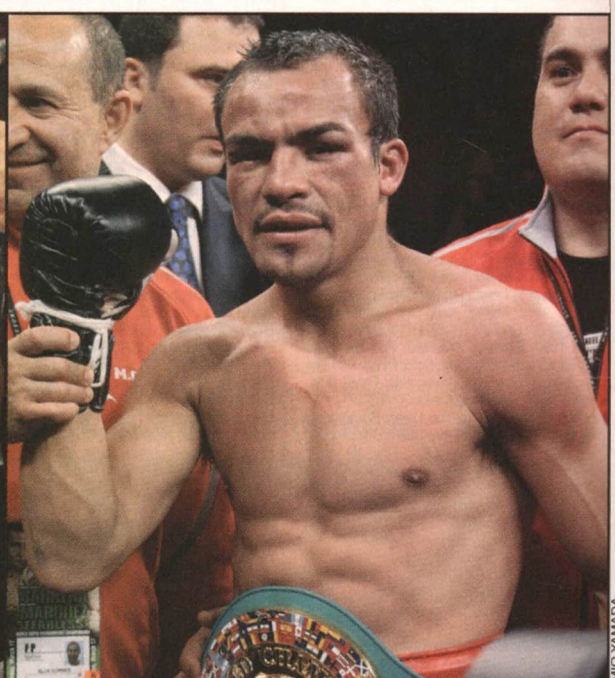


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Most of us would have been happy with a third match between Juan Manuel Marquez and Manny Pacquiao after their thrilling rematch last March, won by Pacquiao via close decision. When Pacquiao and his promoter, Bob Arum, opted for a move to lightweight and a fight with David Diaz instead, it seemed a third fight wouldn't happen. We didn't know then that Marquez would follow Pacquiao up to 135. And he's not going after a soft touch either in world champion Joel Casamayor, one of the smartest old heads in the game.

Casamayor was almost universally written off after his horrendous performance against Jose Armando Santa Cruz, in which he retained the lightweight title with a highly dubious decision. But his exciting win over young slugger Michael Katsidis gave Casamayor's career new life, and in Marquez he takes on a very formidable foe, albeit one who is rising in weight to meet him.

A win by Marquez all but cinches a third match with Pacquiao, provided Pacquiao has beaten Diaz by the time you read this. But a win is far from a guarantee. If you ask us, Casamayor isn't ready to roll over yet, and he knows a fight with Pacquiao would be a huge payday for him too.

Joel Casamayor

Juan Manuel Marquez

Record and World Rating

Casamayor stuns Katsidis with a left

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

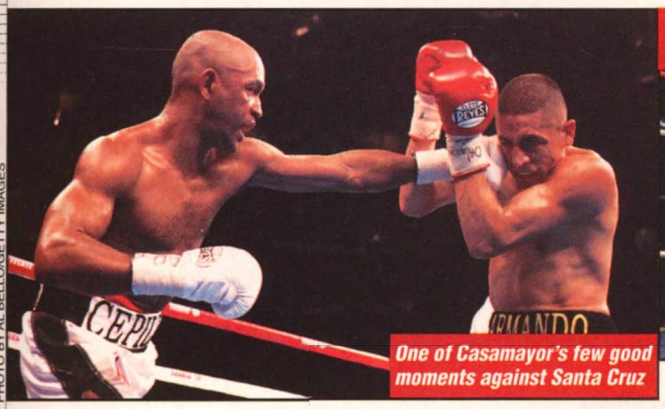
Marquez on the attack against Barrera

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is 36-3-1 with 22 knockouts ... Was highly celebrated star on Cuban national amateur team, compiling a record of 363-30 and winning a silver medal at the 1993 world amateur championships and a gold at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona at bantamweight ... Defected to the United States and turned pro in 1996, just before the start of the summer Olympic Games in Atlanta ... Claimed the WBA super featherweight title in 21st fight ... Made four defenses before losing title unification match ... Has since gone 10-2-1 ... Is recognized as the world lightweight champion by THE RING.

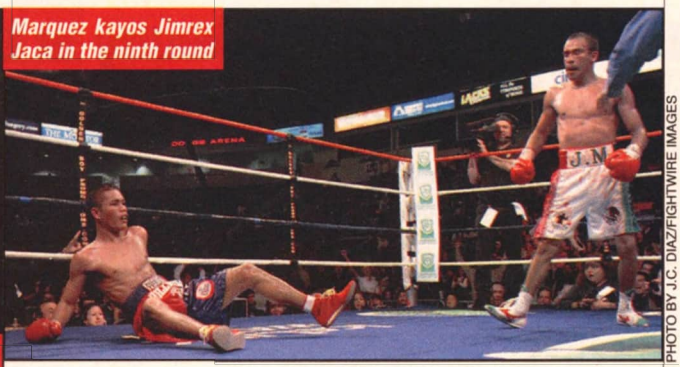
Is 48-4-1 with 35 knockouts ... Had relatively brief amateur career, building 35-1 record in Mexico ... Lost first pro bout by disqualification, in 1993, then went unbeaten in 29 fights over six years ... In 1999 dropped a close decision in WBA featherweight title fight ... Won 10 fights in a row before winning IBF featherweight title in 2003 ... Added WBA version later in same year and defended three times before losing decision in Indonesia ... Is 4-1 since losing title ... Ranked number one at junior lightweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



One of Casamayor's few good moments against Santa Cruz

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Marquez kayos Jimrex Jaca in the ninth round

PHOTO BY J.C. DIAZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

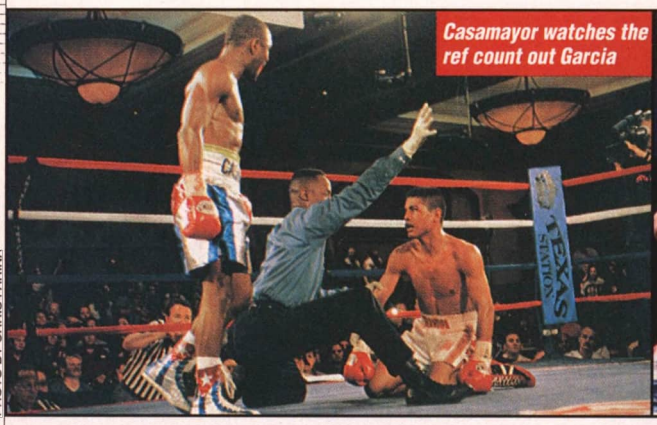
At 36 is at least a couple of years past his prime ... Stands 5'7" with a 69-inch reach ... Neither very powerful nor very fast, relies on slick defense, ring generalship, and experience ... History of cutting ... Chin is solid ... Conditioning inconsistent ... No known chronic injuries normally associated with fighters his age ... Still moves well enough to use entire ring when he has to ... Demonstrates laudable stamina even when he's not in top shape.

Is 34 years old ... Stands 5'7" with a 67-inch reach ... Has never fought at 135 pounds ... Not a knockout puncher per se, but technically so good and quick-handed that he creates openings that lead to stoppages ... Fast on feet, always in superb condition ... Significant history of swelling and bleeding ... Chin can be unreliable, especially in early rounds ... Has lost a step over last couple of years, but compensates with greater work rate and aggression ... Recuperates quickly when hurt.

Joel Casamayor

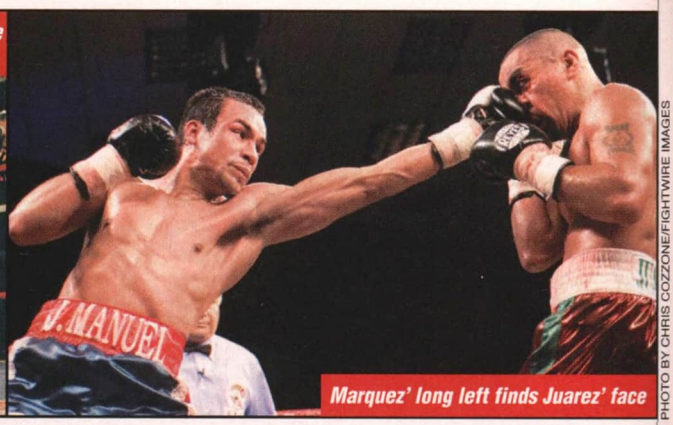
Juan Manuel Marquez

Best Weapons



Casamayor watches the ref count out Garcia

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



Marquez' long left finds Juarez' face

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Great experience makes him one of the smarter, craftier ring generals in the sport ... Still has some good pop on the straight left and the hook ... Knows when and how to kill time and slow down the pace ... Good southpaw jab when he uses it ... Excellent inside ... Outstanding counterpunching instincts ... Knows how to fight dirty and get away with it.

Rapid-fire combinations set up with quick, hard jab ... Laser-straight right cross always a threat ... One of the best combination punchers in the sport ... Superb counterpunching skills ... Mixes punches effectively to head and body ... The longer the fight goes the better he gets ... Extremely intelligent in the ring.

Previous Fight

Stopped exciting puncher Michael Katsidis in the 10th round in California in March ... Dropped Katsidis twice in the first round with counter left hands, but couldn't finish him ... Lost momentum to younger, fresher challenger and was knocked out of the ring in the sixth ... Recovered and floored Katsidis with a left hand in the 10th and stopped him moments later.

Lost a close split decision and the WBC super featherweight title to Manny Pacquiao in March in Las Vegas for THE RING 130-pound title ... Was floored in the third round and hurt badly on at least two other occasions, but dominated middle rounds ... Was badly cut over left eye, but marked up Pacquiao too ... Did enough to win on the cards of many in the media ... Lost by scores of 115-112, 114-113, and 112-115.

Quality of Opposition

Has fought most of the top fighters around his weight, usually with positive results. Owns wins over Roberto Garcia (KO 9), Nate Campbell (W 10), and Diego Corrales (KO 6, W 12), plus a highly controversial victory over Jose Armando Santa Cruz (W 12) ... Two of three career loses were split decisions to Corrales (L 12) and Jose Luis Castillo (L 12) ... Loss to Acelino Freitas (L 12) also very close.

Outside of wars with Pacquiao, resume is solid but not outstanding ... More accomplished victims include Manuel Medina (KO 7), Derrick Gainer (Tech. Dec. 7), and Orlando Salido (W 12) ... Beat Marco Antonio Barrera (W 12) when Barrera was well past his prime ... Overwhelmed respected but limited Rocky Juarez (W 12) ... Lost to Freddy Norwood (L 12), Chris John (L 12), Pacquiao (L 12) in important fights and drew with Pacquiao in their first meeting.

Defense

Is not as hard to hit cleanly as he once was ... Particularly vulnerable to bodyblows ... Tends to block or partially block many punches and remains hard to catch with two punches in a row ... More vulnerable when attacking ... Uses awkward style to slow things down and tie opponents up when necessary ... Not ashamed to clinch ... Has no desire to be exciting for the sake of it.

Smart, awkward southpaw ... Doesn't take a lot of chances, but will stand in his opponent's range and try to out-think him ... Not above using his shoulders, elbows, or head when he can get away with it ... Uses the ring effectively and can fight inside ... The same fighter in the last round that he is in the first ... Never loses his composure.

Joel Casamayor

Juan Manuel Marquez

Style

Busy, technically astute boxer-puncher at his best when counterpunching ... Breaks down opponents with quick, cutting combinations to body and head ... Always punches in combination, and never stands in the same spot for very long ... Technical acumen is his calling card.

Casamayor catches Corrales with a hook

PHOTO BY JONATHAN FERREY/GETTY IMAGES

Marquez slams a right into Tersak Jandaeng

PHOTO BY CHAD LUNDQUIST

Still competent defensively, but busier, more aggressive style practiced recently has opened him up to more punishment ... Not big on moving his head to slip or duck punches ... Uses quick feet and intelligence to dart in and out of punching range and create angles ... More concerned with counterpunching opportunities than with making opponents miss.

The Questions

Which Casamayor will show up—the one who took apart Katsidis or the one that was awful against Santa Cruz? How will he handle Marquez' speed? Can he beat a faster opponent who can outbox him? Was the Katsidis fight his last good performance? Will he fight hard enough to win a close decision if he has to?

How will he handle fighting at lightweight? Will he retain his speed? How much did the brutal Pacquiao rematch take out of him, physically and mentally? Are his cuts from that fight healed? He doesn't have the greatest track record against southpaws, so how will he handle one of the smartest in the business? If Casamayor doesn't press him, will he revert to form and fight passively?

The Outcome

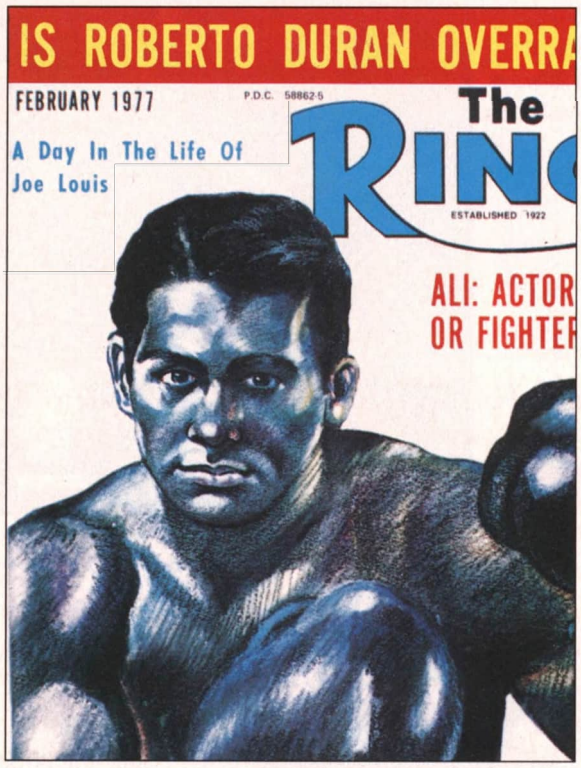
Casamayor, seeing himself as the bigger man, will assume the role of aggressor, giving Marquez the posture he wants. The exchanges will be few and the pace not terribly fast, though it wouldn't surprise anyone to see Casamayor score an early knockdown. But in the end, Marquez' higher work rate and showier combinations will get him a close, probably split decision win.

THE RING Flashback

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

February 1977

COVER STORY: "Is Lightweight Champion Roberto Duran Overrated?" is Nat Loubet's feature questioning whether or not Roberto Duran deserves to be on the pantheon of the greatest lightweight champions in history. Loubet contends that Duran does not, based on his competition level at the time. Loubet writes that fans don't get to see the best Duran has to offer when blowing out opponents such as Emiliano Villa and Alvaro Lopez, whom Duran needed a combined 10 rounds to stop. Neither opponent was sufficiently talented to test the quality of Duran's true greatness.



True, Duran also chewed up Saoul Mamby and Lou Bizzaro, who were both rated, but, according to Loubet, "Hands Of Stone" avoided challenges against Vicente Saldivar and Rudy Hernandez. It was noted that the times when Duran faced formidable opposition, he was extended the distance, not completely outclassing his foes. Loubet suggests other indications to test Duran's greatness were out there, such as WBC welterweight titleholder Carlos Palomino. A year after this story appeared, Duran avenged the only loss of his career at the time, stopping Esteban De Jesus to unify the WBC and WBA lightweight titles. In 1979, he comprehensively decisioned Palomino.

Duran would be named the "greatest lightweight of all-time" in the September 2001 issue of THE RING.

"A Day In The Life Of Joe Louis" by Shirley Norman follows "The Brown Bomber" as a greeter at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Louis still enjoyed celebrity status, usually drawing hundreds every time he walked the casino floor or was seen gladhanding a high roller. Louis found refuge at Ceasars, where he could stay in touch with the sport that made him famous by popping in to watch Muhammad Ali, George Foreman, Ron Lyle, and others train.

Louis was still heavily in demand at that stage of his life, receiving invitations throughout the country for a variety of events. Home for Louis then was a sprawling ranch house in the Las Vegas suburbs, where he lived with his third wife, Martha, and three adopted children, who were eight, five, and two.

His work at Ceasars also included a guest appearance on Merv Griffin's TV show and hanging out with comedian Rodney Dangerfield.

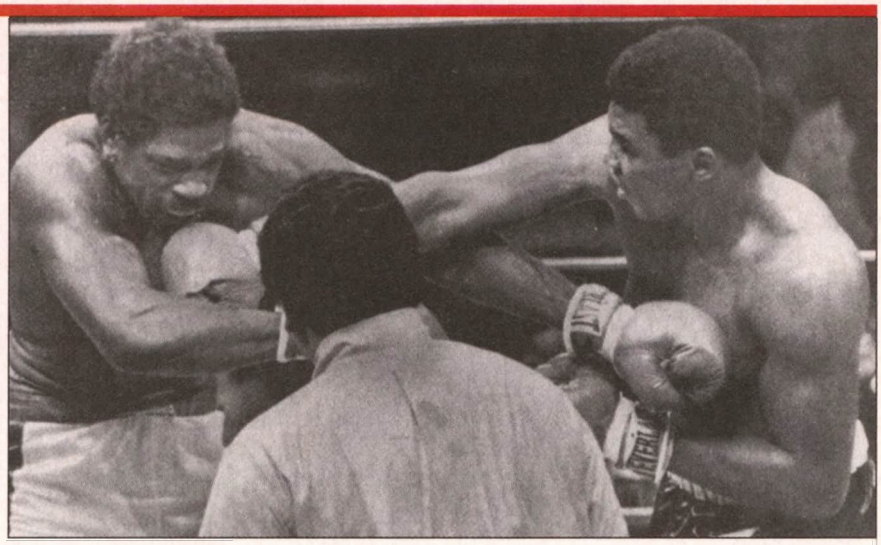
Louis was still in-demand in retirement

World Champions

Heavyweight: Muhammad Ali
Light Heavyweight: vacant
Middleweight: Carlos Monzon
Junior Middleweight: Miguel Angel Castellini
Welterweight: Carlos Palomino
Junior Welterweight: Wilfred Benitez
Lightweight: Roberto Duran
Junior Lightweight: Samuel Serrano
Featherweight: Alexis Arguello
Bantamweight: Alfonso Zamora
Flyweight: Miguel Canto

"Cuevas KO's Tsujimoto In WBA Welter Title Defense" is Joe Koizumi's account of Pipino Cuevas' first title defense of the WBA welterweight title. The 18-year-old Mexican took a road trip to Kanazawa, Japan, to fight Shoji Tsujimoto. The counterpunching Tsujimoto was really no match for the powerpunching Cuevas, who took a cautious approach in the opening round, but began opening up in the second, pounding away at the southpaw with roundhouse rights. Most of Cuevas' salvos were missing, until he found a rhythm in the third round. By the fateful sixth, Cuevas closed in, knocking down Tsujimoto before the fight was stopped.

The Tsujimoto victory was the first of 11 straight successful title defenses for Cuevas, whose title reign ended three years later at the hard hands of a lanky, lean welterweight from Detroit—Tommy Hearns.



Jimmy Young leaves Ron Lyle's title dreams in San Francisco

"Young Takes Lyle Apart In 12 Rounds" by Christopher Coats explores third-rated heavyweight Jimmy Young's 12-round unanimous victory Ron Lyle, behind fast hands and clever infighting. It was a devastating defeat for the 34-year-old Lyle, who lost for the second time against Young. It marked the first time a heavyweight bout was held in San Francisco since 1960, when Zora Folley beat Eddie Machen.

"Exclusive Interview: Danny Lopez" by Howard Siegel is a nice chat with the newly crowned WBC featherweight titlist Danny Lopez, fresh off his victory over David Kotey, in Accra, Ghana. Lopez stated how important winning the title was, especially since his older brother, Ernie "Indian Red" Lopez, never won a title.

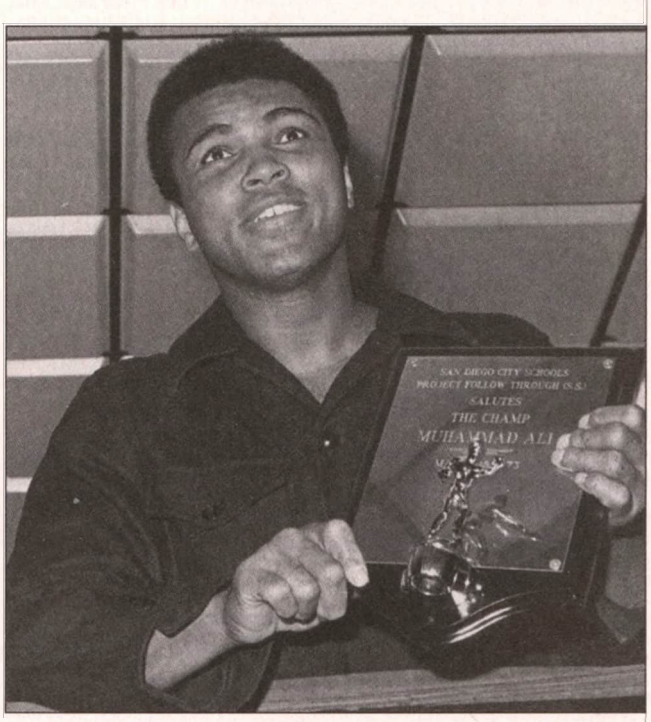
"Ali Joins Ranks Of Actor/Boxers ... Which Will It Be?" by Marshall Reed, delves into a time-honored custom of heavyweight fighters catching the acting bug and thinking of an alternative career. But Muhammad Ali had to be unique, Reed notes, playing himself in an upcoming film about his life called—what else? —*The Greatest.*

Ali's name joined a roster of fighter-actors like heavyweight contenders Tony Galento and Hank Hankinson, and also included Ali contemporaries Ken Norton and Jerry Quarry.

Ali already had some acting credits to his name, with a short-lived fling during his boxing exile in a Broadway play called *Buck White.* Ali's playfulness and ease in front of the public and before a camera made him a natural, felt Tom Gries, the director of *The Greatest.*

"The Saugerties Smasher, Little Petey Hayes, Rose To Top In 1930s" by Johnny Ferrara touches base with former featherweight contender Petey Hayes, who at the time was 64 and working with a travel agency. The fight-by-fight narrative is highlighted by Hayes' victory over Kid Chocolate, at Ebbets Field, in Brooklyn, New York, in July 1934.

"Chacon Back With KO Win" by Don Fraser features a card in Stockton, California, that saw former WBC featherweight titlist Bobby Chacon, who had been idle the previous 10 months, beat Filipino journeyman Bonnie Necessario in less than two rounds, before 2,240 at the Civic Auditorium. It was part of an eight-fight winning streak for Chacon. ■



Ali's contagious smile and magnetic charisma made him natural at acting

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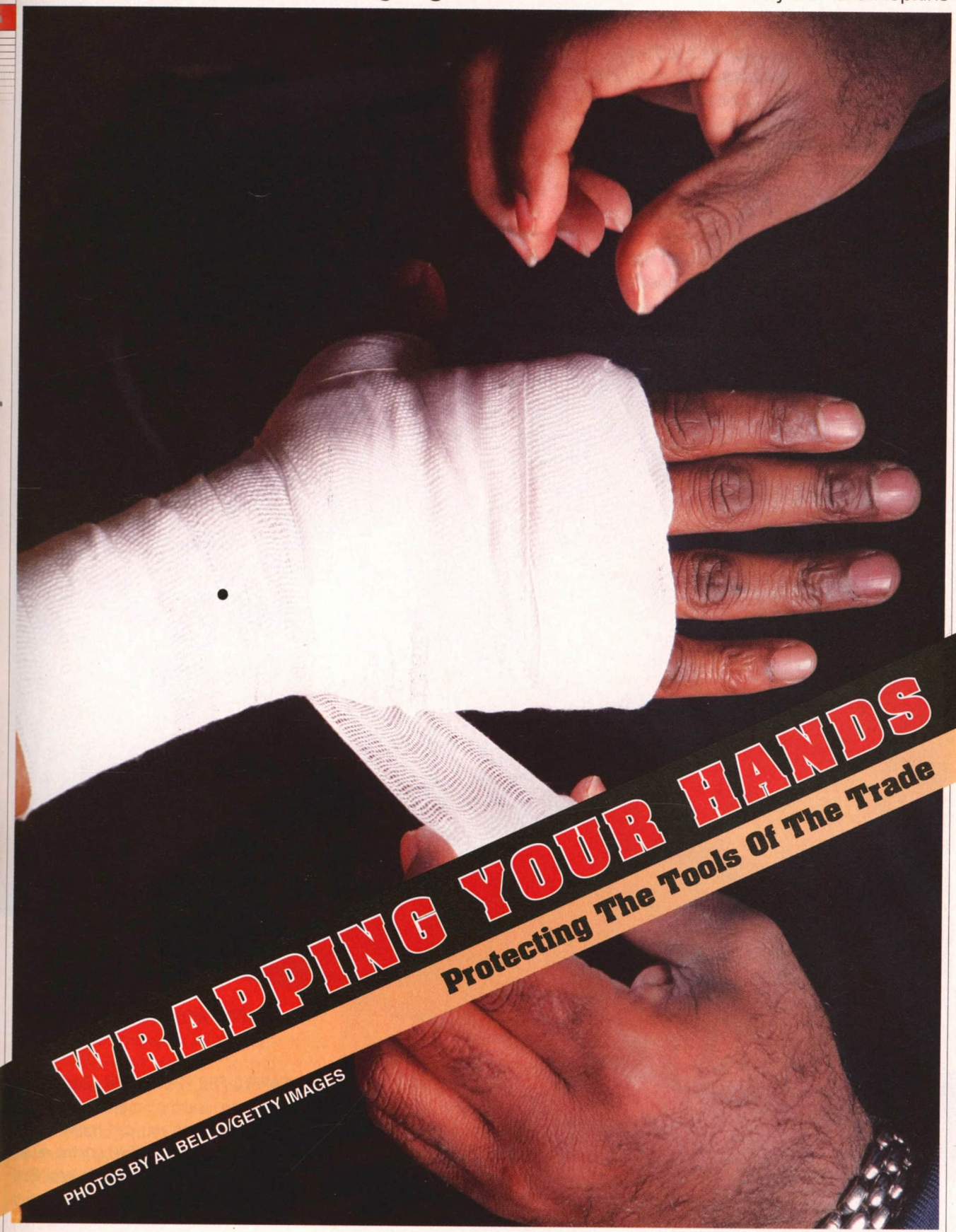
[Perfect Execution]

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



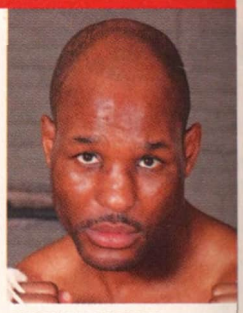
WRAPPING YOUR HANDS

Protecting The Tools Of The Trade

PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

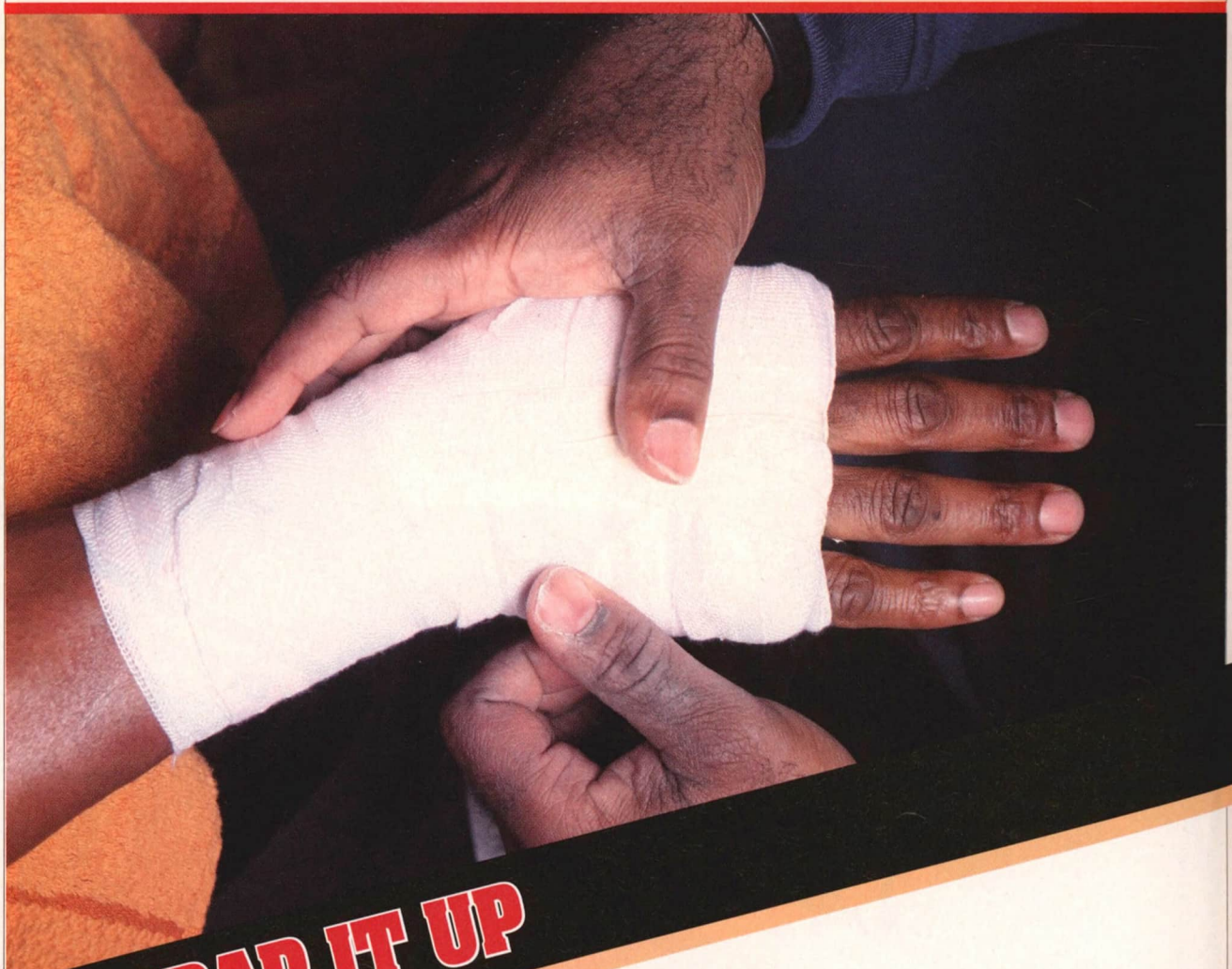
A fighter's hands are his tools. They're his hammer and saw. Without them, he can't do anything. He can be the hardest hitter out there or the fastest or the smartest, but if he can't punch, he's in trouble. So you have to protect your hands. They're your bread and butter. The way to do that is to wrap them right, or have someone who knows what he's doing, like your coach, wrap them for you. Naazim Richardson wraps my hands. He's the best around.

I've been pretty blessed with my hands. I've had no breaks, ever. I've had some soreness, but not to the point where if I hit someone my hand is going to hurt. Part of that is because of the way I fight; I try to leave the top of the head alone. That's one of the hardest parts on your body, so I stay away from the skull. I try to hit my opponent around the temple, or around the eyebrows on down. But no matter where you hit your opponent, your hands are going to get hurt if they're not wrapped properly.



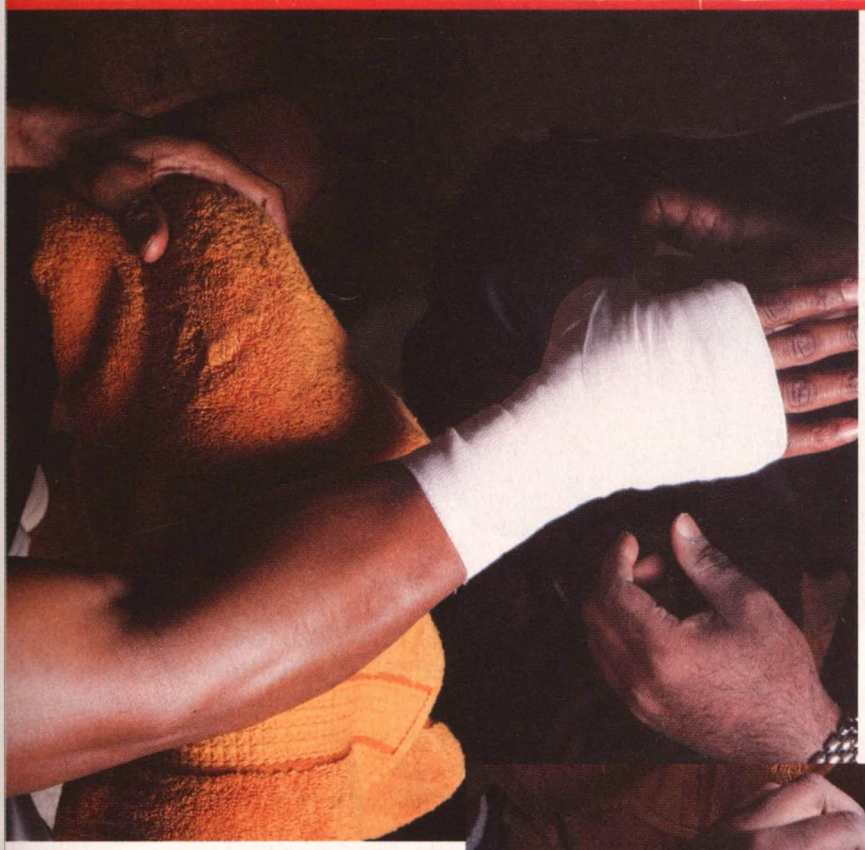
BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)



WRAP IT UP

THE WHOLE HAND HAS TO BE WRAPPED FOR PROTECTION. Each hand gets a full roll of gauze. It's gauze, then padding, and then medical tape over it. For training, some guys use cotton, reusable handwraps that you can throw in the washing machine and use over and over again. Some use a combination of the two: the reusable handwraps with gauze and medical tape over it. I don't bother with the reusable kind. But if you don't want to go through two rolls of gauze every day, the cotton type is fine.



MAKE SURE YOU GET THE WRIST. If your wrist bends when you land a punch, you're almost guaranteed to break a bone in there—or worse. Your wrist has to be supported so that it stays straight under the weight of landing a punch.

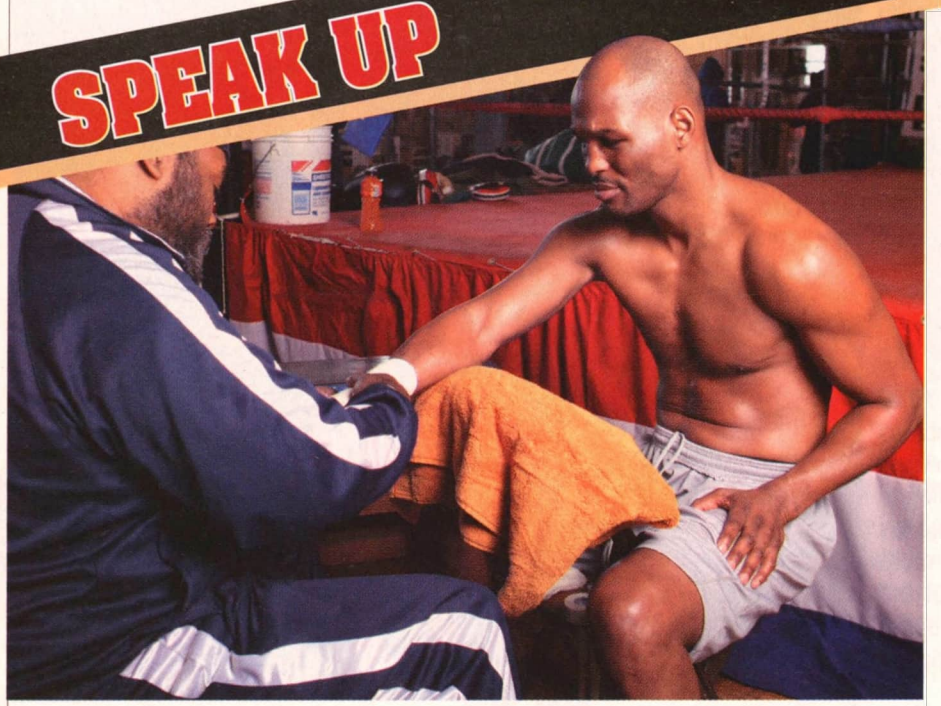
WHEN YOU MAKE A FIST AND HIT SOMETHING, THE BONES IN YOUR HAND SPREAD OUT to absorb the impact. So when your hands are being wrapped, your fingers should be spread slightly. If they're too close together and are wrapped in place like that, the bones have no place to go when your punch lands. They can't move. That causes injury. So make sure when you're wrapping your hands that you leave some space between your fingers.

THE WRAP SHOULD BEGIN AROUND YOUR WRIST, move up to your thumb, crisscross around your hand, and then back down to your wrist again. There's extra padding to protect the knuckles. Most of your injuries occur around the thumb and wrist, more so than around the knuckles. But the knuckles can get hurt too. So don't spare the padding, which is just several layers, run back and forth, of gauze.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THE HAND IS STEADY, but you still need some flexibility. You don't want your hand locked in where it can't move, but you don't want too much bend in the wrist; that's how wrists get broken. You want to allow a little movement, but have it sturdy enough so that it's protected. When it's done, there should be a straight line along the top, from the wrist to the knuckles.

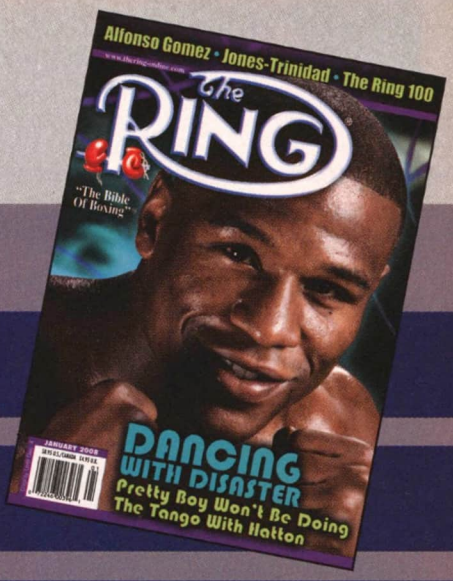
SINGLE PIECES OF MEDICAL TAPE GO BETWEEN THE FINGERS TO KEEP THEM SEPARATED. That's to give them space to move and to make the wrap comfortable so that the fighter can reach inside the glove and grab it. You don't want to punch with an open hand. That's how hands and wrists get broken in the ring.

SPEAK UP



ONE TIME, YEARS AGO, MY HANDS WERE WRAPPED A LITTLE TOO TIGHT AND I DIDN'T SPEAK UP IN TIME AND MY HANDS GOT NUMB IN THE RING. And trust me, when your hand is numb in the ring, and you have no blood circulation, it's bad. First of all it's uncomfortable, and you can't really punch with it because it's so awkward and feels funny—like a tingle. Your blood has to be flowing through your hand properly and for that you have to have it wrapped properly. The fighter and the guy wrapping his hands have to communicate. The fighter's got to say, "That's a little too tight, coach," or, "that's a little too loose." Communication is key.

The RING



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[The Fight Doctor]

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

An Underappreciated Risk

When heavyweight Calvin Brock stepped into a boxing ring in Tacoma, Washington, for his match with Eddie Chambers on November 2, 2007, he never imagined this might be his final fight. Brock lost a 12-round decision that night and soon discovered he had a detached retina (a thin layer of tissue attached to the back of the eye) in his right eye. Although this can be a treatable condition, surgical complications left him with severe vision loss.

Brock's amateur career began at age 12. He became the National Golden Gloves Heavyweight Champion in 1998, the US amateur champion in 1999, and competed at the 2000 Olympics. During this time, Brock earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in finance from the University of North Carolina. He has amassed a record of 31-2 (23) since turning professional in 2001.

Throughout his career, Brock has maintained private health insurance and underwent repeated testing before and after fights, including brain MRI scans and examinations with an ophthalmologist. Going into the Chambers fight, Brock was aware of left eye lattice degeneration, the thinning of the outside aspect of the retina.

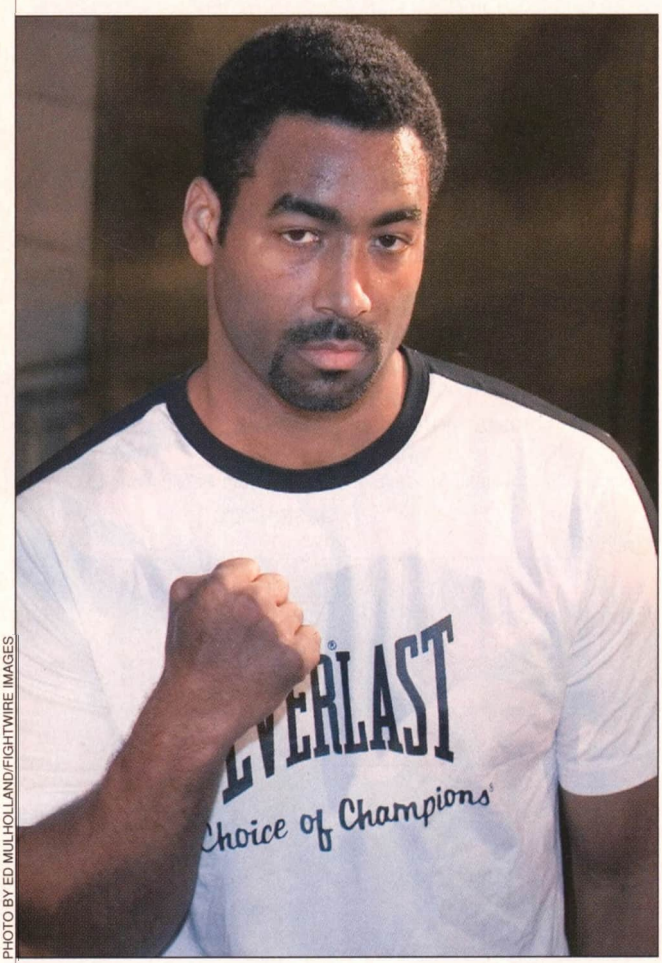

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Brock suffered a potentially career-ending detached retina

Washington State does not require eye exams, so Brock did not undergo one prior to that fight. He denies any eye symptoms before and after the bout, but he did incur two badly swollen eyes. Soon after, he saw his physician and was immediately referred to a retinal surgeon.

The eye works like a camera. Light passes through the front portion of the eye—the cornea, pupil, and lens. It then goes through the center space called the vitreous cavity to focus on the retina. Like the film of a camera, when light focuses and hits the retina, a picture is taken. The message about the picture is sent to the brain through the optic nerve, and this is how we see.

A retinal tear occurs when the vitreous cavity pulls away from the retina. A tear can become a retinal detachment when vitreous liquid passes through the tear separating the retina from the back of the eye. Vision is lost in the area of the detachment. This can spread and produce blindness unless retinal reattachment surgery is performed immediately.

Ocular complications by head punches can be explained by three mechanisms: a direct blow to the globe of the eye producing local trauma, a direct blow to the temple and outer bony rim of the eye socket, or compression of the globe. All three can result in a pulling of the retina away from the vitreous base.

In 1995, Dr. Howard Schatz, a retinal specialist, recognized another calling and turned to photography. His photographs regularly appear in *Vanity Fair* and *Newsweek*. Residing in New York City, he is currently working on a book highlighting the sport of boxing. During extensive interviews, he has noticed a distinct difference between boxers and other patients.

"I find boxers generally not as worried about their body," noted Schatz. "Normal patients ask, 'When can I see,' while boxers ask, 'When can I start sparring?'"

But few fighters are aware of their risk and frequency of serious eye injuries.

In 1987, Drs. Vincent J. Giovinazzo and Lawrence Yannuzzi of the Sports Vision Institute of the Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital conducted a study in cooperation with the New York State Athletic Commission following fighters over a two-year period. Seventy-four boxers applying for new or renewal licenses were sequentially examined. Vision-threatening injuries were found in 58 percent of boxers, while 24 percent had retinal tears (two fight-

ers with detachments). There was a strong correlation of retinal injury related to the number of bouts and number of losses.

Another study, which appeared in the *British Journal Of Sports Medicine* in February of 2005, examined 1,032 Italian professional and amateur boxers between 1982 and 1998. They found a significant increase in minor ocular injuries, but only a small increase in serious injuries in boxers in comparison to the general population.

Dr. Yannuzzi notes that some individuals are more predisposed than others to retinal detachment.

"Caucasians or fair-skinned people are at more risk, along with those who are near-sighted, people with a family history of retinal detachment, and anyone who has previously suffered a tear or detachment," said Yannuzzi.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

A new study indicates that blows to the head can damage the pituitary gland

"I believe if I had deeper set eyes, I wouldn't have been as much at risk for a retinal detachment," said Brock.

Schatz agrees. "Absolutely. All of the great boxers have deep set eyes—big glabella (the bump in the lower part of the forehead, just over the eyes) and zygoma (cheek bone)."

"I would advise boxers to not take any fight for granted," said Brock. "Get thorough physicals before and after every fight, including seeing an eye doctor and getting an MRI of the brain."

Dr. Schatz believes it is most important for fighters to recognize the signs and symptoms that could indicate a retinal detachment or tear. "Light flashes shouldn't be ignored," he said. "The outside or periphery of the retina can be damaged and a fighter not know it, and a general ophthalmology exam may not detect it. As a result, many tears may be missed on prefight exams and can become full detachments by sparring or in a fight."

With early recognition, surgery can have a 90 to 95 percent success rate, barring unforeseen complications.

Brock is soon to undergo further retinal evaluations at Duke University. He has a real estate broker's license and just began a business with his father in construction renovation. But he hasn't yet given up on boxing.

"My injury happened at a good time," said Brock. "I needed a break. I got burned out. I knew when I lost to Chambers I would have to rebuild my career. I am excited about my current professional future. But, if people see me back in the ring, it will because God healed my eyes."

Brock is a testament to the sport in so many ways. All fighters should learn from his experience, heed his recommendations in protecting their health, and appreciate that a boxer's eyes are more than the windows to the soul.

***

In the April 2008 issue of THE RING, I discussed growth hormone as a performance-enhancing supplement. I also raised the possibility of chronic head injury producing GH deficiency by affecting the pituitary, a gland that sits behind the nose at the base of the skull. This gland can control stamina, strength, muscle mass, and affect memory and mood.

A new study of retired Turkish boxers, cited in the *Annals Of Internal Medicine*, demonstrated nearly half of the fighters had dysfunction to the pituitary gland, causing growth hormone deficiency. The researchers suggested that competing and retired fighters, especially those who had suffered a concussion, be tested for growth hormone deficiency.

Although this study is the first of its kind and could have important repercussions, it in no way should be taken as an excuse for boxers to use growth hormone supplementation. It remains illegal in sports, has unpredictable side effects, and will soon be tested for by athletic commissions.

***

Correction: In my September 2008 column, it indicated that following serious brain injuries in 2006, the NSAC enacted a glove change. The injuries were in 2005. ■

By Jim Bagg

The Sweet Science Ain't Rocket Science

It goes without saying (but the Baggmeister's saying it anyway, because stating the obvious is 98-percent of how a sportswriter makes his living) that Rocky Balboa did his share of positive things for boxing. But he also did two rather negative things: He led people who aren't boxing fans to believe that every fight is like Corrales-Castillo multiplied by 100 in terms of action and drama, leading to inevitable disappointment when those folks sit down to watch their first real fight; and he perpetuated the unfortunate stereotype that boxers have the intellect of mentally challenged mountain goats.

Ludwig Von Baggthoven has been following this sport a long time. He's not going to say how long exactly, but let's just say that Kid McCoy wanted to name his signature shot "The Twisty-Wisty Punch" and the Baggster talked him out of it. Anyway, in these many years of covering boxing, yours truly has met quite a few fighters who defied the Rocky stereotype. It's not just the guys like Bobby Czyz, whose high IQ qualified him for MENSA and had to remind you of it every time he opened his yapper. There are uneducated guys with street smarts like Bernard Hopkins, brilliant talkers like Muhammad Ali, sensitive souls like Floyd Patterson. Not all fighters misread the cue cards and pronounce "smell manly" as "smeel mainly." Boxers, as a general rule, are smarter than they get credit for.

But sometimes, they're every bit as dumb as the cinematic caricature suggests.

And sometimes they're even dumber than that.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Malignaggi tops Bagg's dumb list with a hair-braided move

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Judah was dumfounded and irate when Rafael revealed the facts

Take Paulie Malignaggi, for example. For the most part, the preening pugilist from Brooklyn has marketed himself with great intelligence, making a name for himself beyond what his talent and entertainment value should warrant by displaying a cocky attitude and some eye-catching hairstyles. Against Lovemore Ndou in May, however, he took it a step too far, and crossed the line between creativity and stupidity.

You want to look like the third Williams sister with some braided hair extensions? Go right ahead. But did it ever cross Paulie Malignant's mind that he ought to test out his new tresses before entering the ring? Clearly, he didn't give the Bob Marley 'do a dress rehearsal, and the hair started flopping in his face just 30 seconds into the fight. Paulie's hair became the story—the mane event, if you will. It distracted him repeatedly, embarrassed him, prompted a humiliating mid-fight haircut, and nearly cost him the fight, as he barely squeaked by against an opponent he'd dominated a year earlier.

And on top of all that, like almost every white guy who tries to pull off dreads or braids, he just plain looked like a doofus. The only thing more pathetic would be if Nicolay Valuev got braided shoulder-hair extensions.

We've seen ridiculous trunks, ridiculous ring-walk outfits, and ridiculous hairstyles before, but never anything superficial that threatened to cost the superior boxer a victory. For entering the ring with hair extensions without taking them for a test drive first, Paulie Malignaggi *should* have the Baggorama's 2008 Imbecile of the Year award locked up.

Fortunately for Paulie, stupidity has abounded of late, and the award is still very much up for grabs. Unquestionably, Zab Judah is making a strong play for it. In fact, Zab's been so consistently stupid for so long, it may be time to change his name to Ju-Duh.

According to boxing writer Dan Rafael, who never goes to press without double-checking his facts, while training for his scheduled May 31 fight with Shane Mosley, Zabby threw a temper tantrum and, in the midst of his spaz-out, put his arm through the steam room shower door at the Top Rank Gym in Las Vegas. That led to the cancellation of the Mosley fight, and instead Ju-Duh picked up a tough August date against Josh Clottey for half the money.

But injuring himself and costing himself cash weren't enough for the world's youngest 30-year-old—or for his father Yoel, who tends to act the same age as Zab sometimes. The Ju-Duhs stuck with their story that Zab fell in the shower and sliced up his arm by accident, even though it sounded fishy from the start. Zab then publicly called Rafael a "piece of" something smelly, and Yoel threateningly said Rafael was "going to have a problem with me now."

What's dumber? Injuring yourself because you're behaving like a child? Or getting into a war of words with a writer who has the platform to trash you on a daily basis if he so chooses?

If Ju-Duh is going to behave like a child, then he ought to

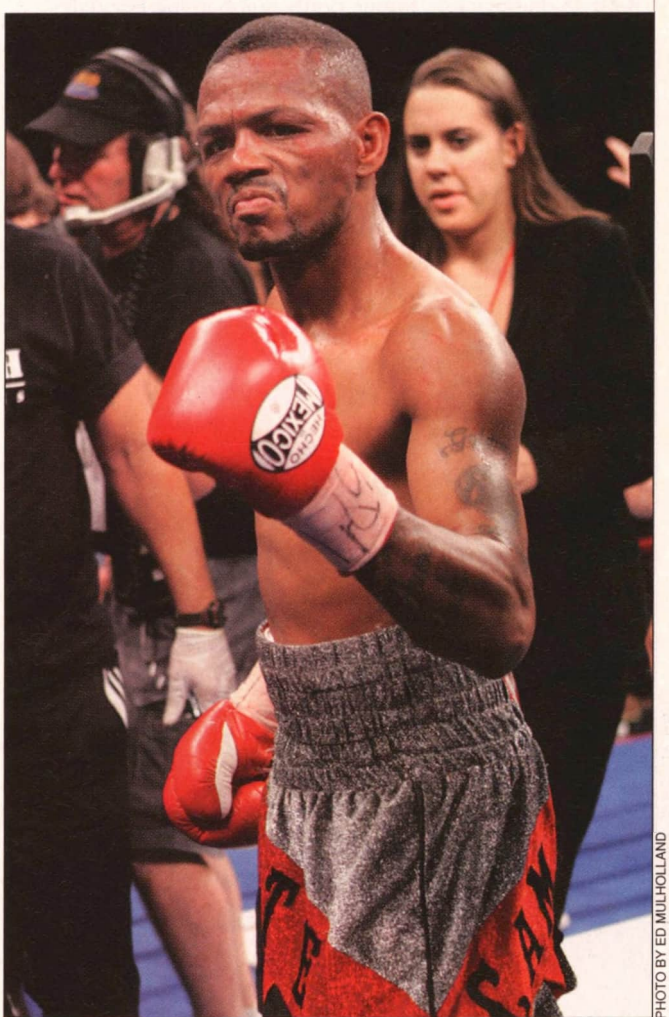

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Campbell needs to get a clue before spouting about The Ring belt

clean himself like a child: sitting down, in the tub, where he can't "fall" and injure himself.

Speaking of fighters antagonizing members of the media, Nate Campbell earned himself a spot on the list of boxers with Balboa brains by focusing his negative energy on this very magazine you hold in your hands. Campbell writes a column on maxboxing.com, and for the most part, he's used his Web space to lobby for a fight with THE RING lightweight champion Joel Casamayor. That's all well and good, since it is indeed the most meaningful fight that could be made in the division. However, the way Campbell's gone about it suggests that he's the kind of genius who probably thinks "galaxy" is spelled with two "Xs" or something.

Campbell has joined the small but vocal crew of writers accusing THE RING and its owner, Golden Boy Promotions, of foul play—which would be an admirable cause if any of these writers had been able to come up with a single instance of a Golden Boy fighter getting favorable treatment in THE RING rankings or on the pages of the magazine. Instead, they talk in generalities and speculation, because that's all they have to base their arguments on. Campbell trash-talking a magazine that's always been fair to him and a promotional entity with whom he'd like his promoter, Don King, to do business seems pretty dumb to the Baggalini.

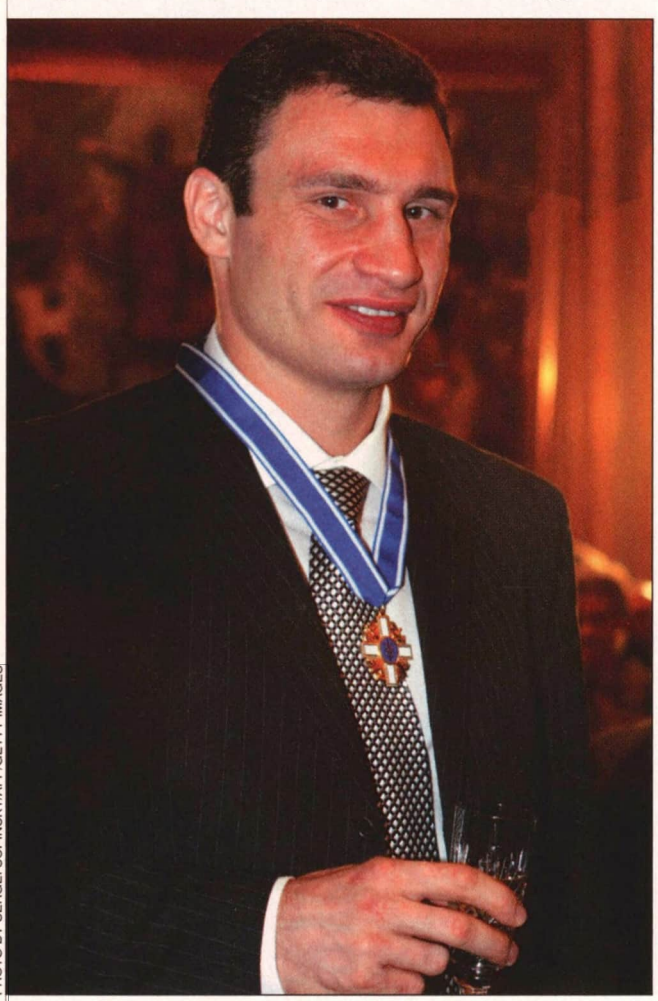

PHOTO BY SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko should leave politics alone

Especially when Campbell takes it a step farther and praises the alphabet groups that have made a mockery of the rankings process for decades and have de-valued the term "world champion" to no end. Gee, let's see, Campbell has the IBF, WBA, and WBO belts, but he doesn't hold THE RING title. Yep, sounds like he's the perfect impartial source for claiming the alphabet straps are real world titles and THE RING belt isn't.

Campbell insists that THE RING title can't possibly be a real world title because there are no forced title defenses. Way to show a complete lack of understanding about boxing history, Nate. For roughly a century, until the alphabets started marginalizing the sport of boxing, the only "real world titles" all worked that way—no forced title defenses, allowing the marketplace to dictate the matches. Sorry, Dumbbell—*err*, Campbell—but the linear title, which Casamayor holds whether you like it or not, is the *only* real world title there is. You're Casamayor's top contender, and the Baggapalooza hopes you get your shot. But you may want to remove your head from your rectum first and realize that accusing the Cuban's promoter of crimes they haven't committed isn't the best way to convince them to work with you.

While Campbell is running around screaming that he's been victimized by boxing politics, another fighter on the Baggamaniac's dummy list, Vitali Klitschko, is being victimized by his own obsession with politics. Klitschko got his butt handed to him in a Ukrainian election three years ago, yet here he is running for public office back home once again ... and getting crushed in the polls. Geez, Hillary Clinton takes a hint better than this guy does. Hey, Nit-Witschko, here's a thought: Instead of wasting your time pursuing a political career that you're clearly not meant for, how about focusing your energy on getting through a training camp without ending up in traction?

The verbal abuse Vitali took for quitting against Chris Byrd turned him into a never-say-die warrior, which was a good thing in terms of his in-ring career. Too bad he can't remember how to quit when he really needs to.

But perhaps the dumbest fighter of all is the one who risks his life in the ring when there's hardly any upside and enormous downside. In boxing, the line between courage and stupidity is always a blurry one, but in the case of Oscar Larios, it couldn't be more clear. Nevada doctors diagnosed him with a brain bleed after his TKO loss to Jorge Linares in July '07. Larios was 30 years old, on the downslide after losing for the third time in six fights, and had no major paydays awaiting him. Given those circumstances, retirement was the only acceptable option.

But Larios has fought twice since, avoiding the American commissions that would deny him a license and fighting in Mexico instead. So far, he's had no further complications. But the WBC, in its infinite wisdom, is lining him up for another fight against the young and sensational Linares, which sounds like a complication waiting to happen.

Fighters such as Joe Mesi and Edwin Valero have continued their boxing careers after being diagnosed with brain

The Monthly Mailbagg

If you've ever wondered how many beers it takes for the Baggaroo's readers e-mails to seem coherent, the answer is 16. But here goes with this month's only offering that seemed worth running whether sober or sauced:

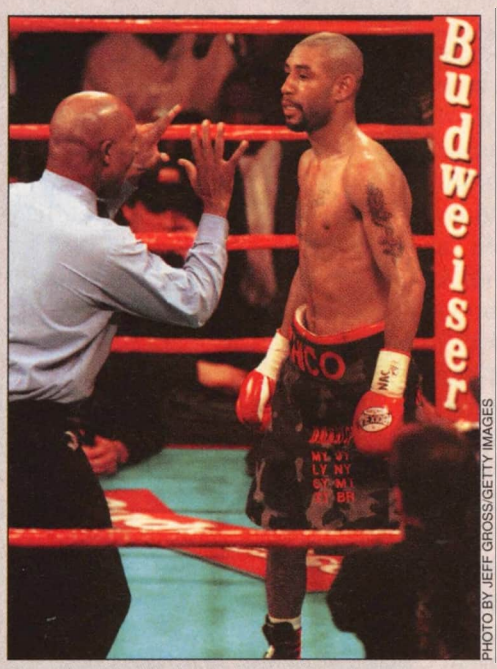

PHOTO BY JEFF GROSS/GETTY IMAGES

Bagg sacks the notion of a standing eight-count

Hello Mr. Bagg,

I have subscribed to THE RING for about 18 years, best I can count. Of course, my memory is about as short as my you-know-what these days, so it might be more or less. My point is this: I work 60-hour weeks and it has become increasingly difficult to find time to sit down and read it. A while back, when I had a couple days off, I was reading the four issues still stacked on my desk and decided not to renew my subscription simply for this reason. Then I got toward the end of the December '07 issue and ran into your column. What a welcome surprise. I dropped my renewal card in the mail the next day.

I do have a question (you thought I was writing just for the flattery?): What is your opinion of the now-defunct standing eight-count? I know the arguments both for and against, but have always considered it an extremely useful tool. Good or bad that it has fallen by the wayside?

Brian Key
Pineville, KY

Brian,

The Baggasaurus is not a fan of the standing eight-count, and if you "know the arguments both for and against," then Martin Van Baggen doesn't have to explain to you why. So let's just move on to the real reason Mr. Baggjangles ran your e-mail: So that the management of THE RING understands that "Hitting On The Break" translates directly into dollars and cents for the company.

You guys know the address to send the Baggtastic's bonus check to. Prostitutes also accepted.

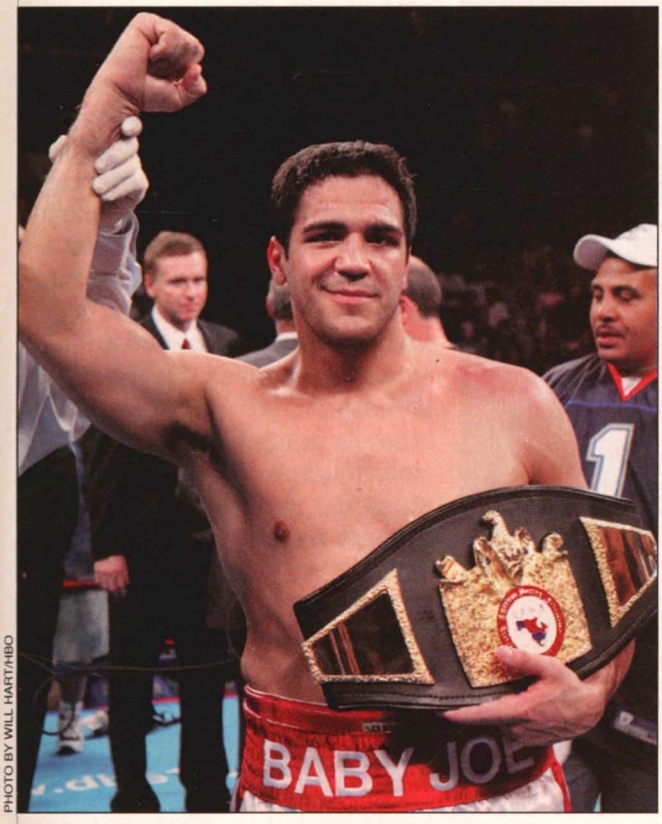

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Bagg could understand why Mesi continues, but not Larios

injuries, but in their cases, they're young and have plenty to fight for, so even if you disagree with their decisions, at least you can understand where they're coming from. Larios is more like ... well, Rocky Balboa, who you may recall had brain damage after his fight with Ivan Drago, but went ahead and had a non-sanctioned streetfight against a guy half his age and then a 10-rounder against the reigning heavyweight champ.

Maybe it's not the Baggalammadingdong's place to tell anyone how to live their lives, but there's no harm in telling everyone to live according to this simple rule: Think before you act. In boxing, of late, there have been way too many fighters acting first and never getting around to the thinking part.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Puerto Rican lightweight Celestino Rodriguez, who brought a record of 5-10-2 (5) into his bout with 5-0-1 (3) countryman Francisco Cabrera on the undercard of a Telefutura show in May. Rodriguez had won only once in his previous 12 fights, so he sure looked like an easy mark, but he came in motivated and exposed Cabrera as the most overrated fighter this side of Kimbo Slice by scoring three first-round knockdowns en route to a victory in just 96 seconds.

And he didn't even need to make his opponent's cauliflower ear explode to get the job done. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Retirement Reaction

I'm very disappointed with "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather. His sudden retirement is bad for him and for boxing. It's bad for him, because he failed to prove that he is the number-one pound-for-pound boxer in the world. He failed to prove that he is the best welterweight of all-time. And, most importantly, he forgot that he is a boxer and not a businessman.

His retirement is likewise bad for boxing because he has deprived fans of his exceptional boxing skills, which I consider way above the elite level. He has also deprived boxing fans of a fight between him and the Miguel Cotto-Antonio Margarito winner. I hope he comes back and proves that I am wrong.

DIGNO L. CAMACHO JR.
Marikina, Philippines

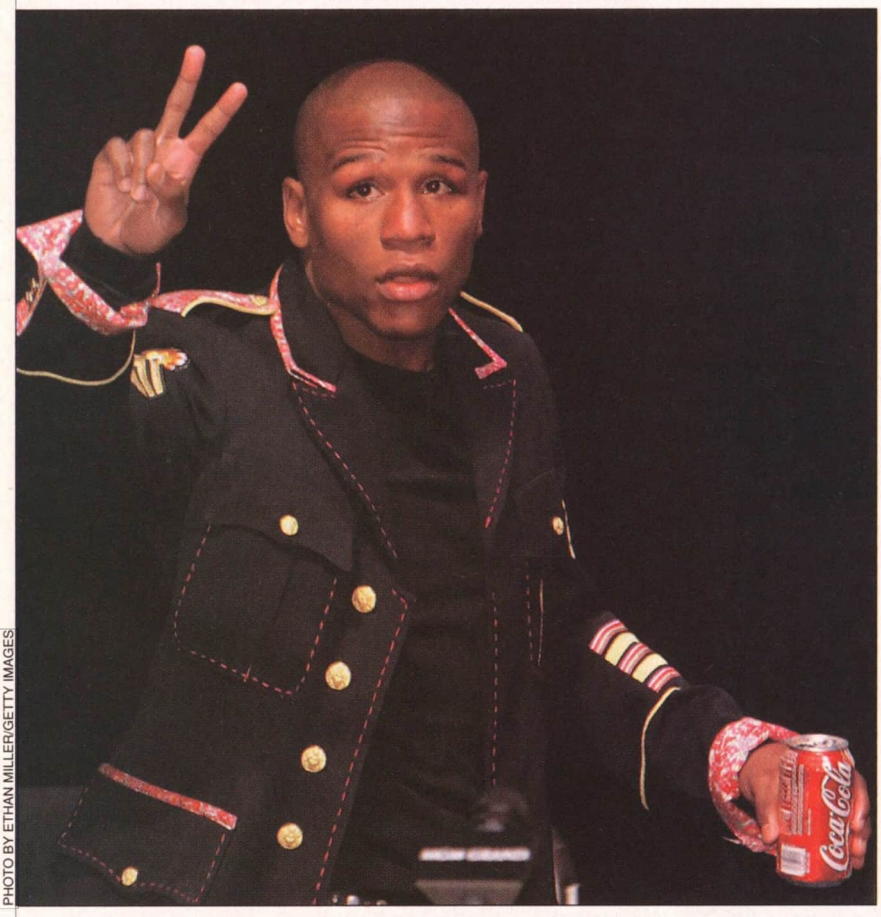

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Peace out: Floyd Mayweather might be gone (at least for the time being), but he's still on the minds of RING readers. Among those writing about "Pretty Boy's" retirement are Digno L. Camacho Jr. and Tim McLean, who had different takes on Mayweather's exit.

I don't think there is one person who believes that Floyd Mayweather will stay retired. A year ago, I wrote to THE RING to gush about the bout between Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya. It turned out to be one of the dullest fights I have ever seen. I am pleased, however, that Mayweather's most recent alleged retirement means that fight fans won't have to sit through a rematch with De La Hoya. The two could fight 10 times and it would yield the same result.

TIM McLEAN
Toledo, OH

Stick To Boxing!

What a metamorphosis for Ivan Goldman! Just last year, he predicted Kermit Cintron would defeat UFC fighter Sean Sherk if Cintron "stepped into the cage with the mixed martial artist." Now, in the September 2008 issue of THE RING, he states matter-of-factly that when a boxer and a mixed martial artist meet, "whoever chooses the turf wins." It seems Mr. Goldman has learned something about MMA. Unfortunately, as his comments about the sport elsewhere in his column demonstrate, it is not enough.

Amazingly, Goldman's column was one of two that touched on MMA in that issue of THE RING. Compared to Jeff Ryan, Goldman discusses MMA like an expert. Then again, maybe Ryan just needs practice. For someone who professes to hate MMA, Goldman

PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

Thanks to his mind-boggling trilogy with Rafael Marquez, Israel Vazquez has become a fan favorite. Among them is reader Pedro Jaimes, who believes "El Magnifico" has earned an easy fight before climbing back into the ring with Marquez a fourth time.

seems to write about it every other month.

Goldman and Ryan are fine boxing writers, and they need to stick to what they know. I can and do read about MMA, football, tennis, and other sports elsewhere. THE RING is for boxing.

ALEX WILLIAMS
alexwilliams123@gmail.com

Better Than Trinidad?

I was always a big fan of Felix Trinidad, and one of the things that I admired most was the huge fan base he had among Puerto Ricans. Every time "Tito" fought, all of Puerto Rico climbed in the ring with him. He was and still is adored in his homeland. Even after his loss to Bernard Hopkins, he didn't lose one single fan, and Madison Square Garden was packed with his people to cheer him on against Roy Jones.

Now, I've been watching another great Puerto Rican fighter, Miguel Cotto, and I think he may be even better than Trinidad because he seems to have more dimensions to his game, which was especially obvious during the Shane Mosley fight. Besides, it never hurts to have an entire country in your corner!

ROBERT MAYE
bobby13452@hotmail.com

Rooney Rave

Thank you Michael Rivest and THE RING for the poignant and excellent article about Kevin Rooney ("Kevin Rooney Reclaims His Life") in the August 2008 issue. He is a hero to all of us. I was much moved and I am praying for Kevin as he takes one day at a time towards his recovery.

ERIC BRANDT
Carlisle, PA

Bring Back Hazzard

I was shocked to read in *The Ring 2008 Boxing Almanac & Book Of Facts* that Larry Hazzard was fired after 22 years as the New Jersey Athletic Control Board Commissioner. This was done for apparently no reason other than it was deemed "time for a change." The New Jersey Attorney General should be petitioned to reinstate Mr. Hazzard. From my many years of watching him as a referee, I was sad to see him leave the ring for an important behind-the-scenes position. I didn't think Hazzard belonged with the pencil-pushers then, and I still don't. But I do know that he gives the sport of boxing the integrity that it needs.

GLOVER L. HILL
Wewahitchka, FL

Deserves Easy Fight

One of my favorite fighters is junior featherweight champion Israel Vazquez. He truly embodies the warrior's spirit. His heart and willingness to put on a good show is what every boxing fan admires. I was privileged to watch his first two fights with Rafael Marquez on the tube, and luckier still to see their third encounter live in Carson City. I hope Vazquez takes on easier fights before even considering "four of a kind" with Marquez.

PEDRO JAIMES
Bakersfield, CA

Rejuvenating Raul

Raul Marquez just destroyed THE RING's 10th ranked middleweight, Giovanni Lorenzo. He beat the youngster at his own game, pressed the action, and outslugged the slugger. If THE RING doesn't rank Marquez in the top 10, it's a travesty. It's time to recognize "El Diamante" as one of the best 160-pounders in the world. Look out, Pavlik. H-town is coming!

LYNDON ALMS
Houston, TX ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Eric Raskin

The Battle To Avoid A Losing Streak

You learn a lot about a fighter based on how he responds to his first loss. In the cases of **Juan Diaz** and **Michael Katsidis**, before they've even stepped back into the ring, we've picked up valuable information about both of them. Simply by agreeing to fight each other in their first fights back after devastating defeats this past March, both have illustrated that they're authentic warriors and that they haven't had their confidence shattered by tasting defeat.

Former lightweight titlists Diaz, 33-1 (17), and Katsidis, 23-1 (20), will square off in an HBO-televised showdown on September 6 in Diaz' hometown of Houston that has massive fan appeal for two reasons: So much is at stake for two sluggers who can't afford another immediate loss and who will be right back in line for another title challenge with a win, and it's a can't-miss clash of all-action styles.

The 24-year-old Diaz told THE RING that he certainly intends to do his part to ensure a Fight of the Year candidate.

"My manager always tells me, 'Be smart, be smart,' and my corner does too, but for some reason I just like to get in there and mix it up," Diaz said. "It's perfect for me that another guy comes straight at me and stands toe to toe with me. That makes it a lot more fun for me to fight. Throughout the years, I have been developing my boxing skills, and I'm going to be honest: If my brawling skills are not working as they should be, or Katsidis has the better brawling style, then I'm going to go to my Plan B and try to outbox him. But my main priority is to go in there and do what I love to do, and that's fight."

"The Baby Bull" went down in flames doing precisely that against versatile veteran **Nate Campbell** in March, and Katsidis' wide-open defense cost him in a dramatic battle with **Joel Casamayor** two weeks later. Both fighters are willing to take big shots in order to give big shots, which is a dream formula for fight fans.

And both are bound to be motivated. That win-at-all-costs hunger is something Diaz admits was missing when he lost to Campbell.

"A lot of writers were making me out to be a Superman in the lightweight division," Diaz noted in reflecting upon what went wrong against Campbell. "I even told my brother the night before the fight, 'I don't really like people thinking of me like this because I'm always used to being the underdog, I'm always used to having to prove something to people.' And nobody had nothing bad to say about me; they said that I was going to be in a pretty easy fight against Nate Campbell.

"That's why I decided to come back with a strong opponent like Katsidis, that's the right move for me because I have something to prove to the people, that I can be what I used to be, which is the best lightweight in the world."

Just beating Katsidis won't quite be enough to prove that. But it would be a damned fine start.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Diaz (left) and Katsidis (right) launch comeback, against each other

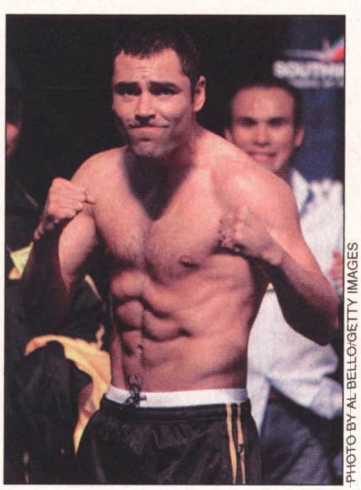

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya's final fight set for December

Listen Up

If you like little guys and legitimate championship fights, and you have a few pay-per-view dollars to spare, clear August 30 on your calendar. That's when RING junior fly champ **Ivan Calderon** defends his belt in a rematch against the man he took it from via close decision, **Hugo Cazares**, in Bayamon, Puerto Rico ... Now that he's given up THE RING cruiserweight title, **David Haye** is scheduled to take his first significant heavyweight fight on November 29, with HBO televising. The opponent was uncertain as of press time, but most of the names being discussed were of the top-20, but not quite top-10, variety ... One week later, December 6, is the date HBO Pay-Per-View has set aside for **Oscar De La Hoya's** next—and supposedly last—fight ... Will **Manuel Medina** ever fade from the alphabet title picture? The five-time featherweight titlist, now 37, is slated to face **Malcolm Klassen** in South Africa on August 29 in an eliminator for a shot at the IBF 130-pound trinket. ■

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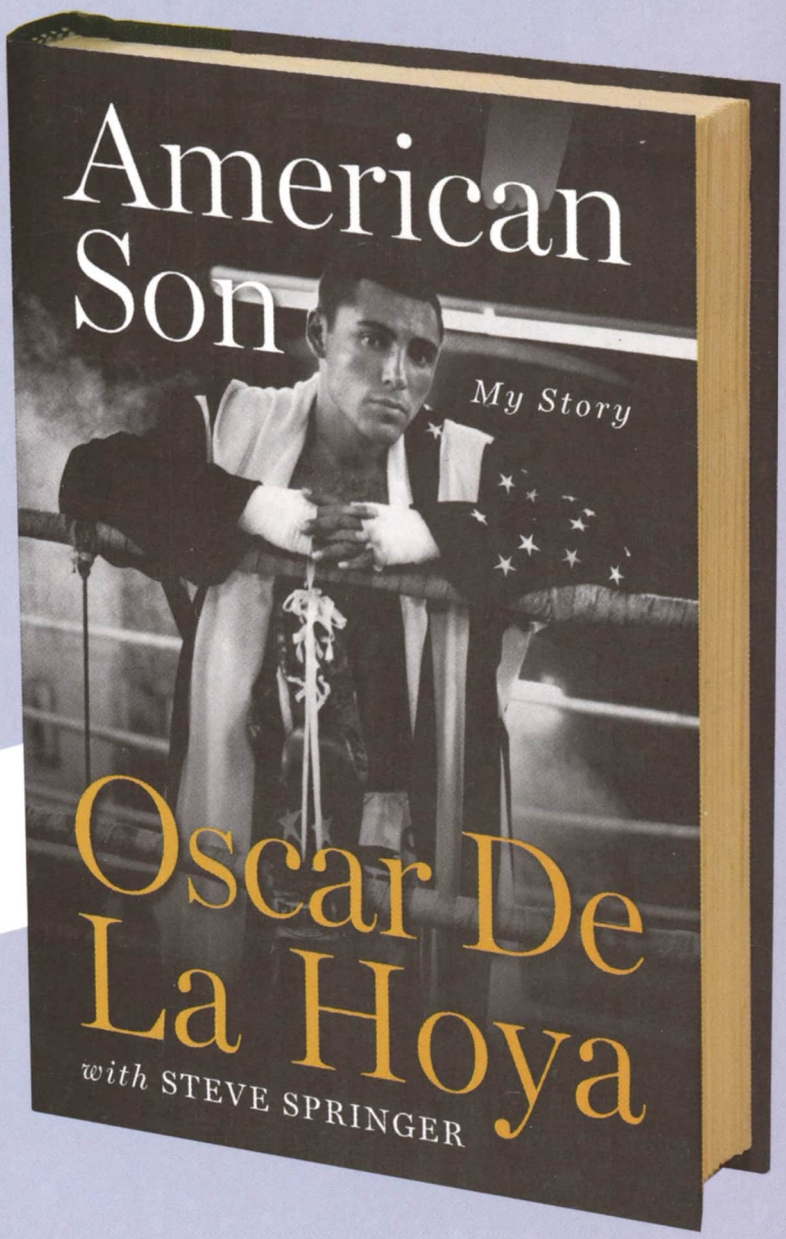

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